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ISBN 978-90-5691-729-6

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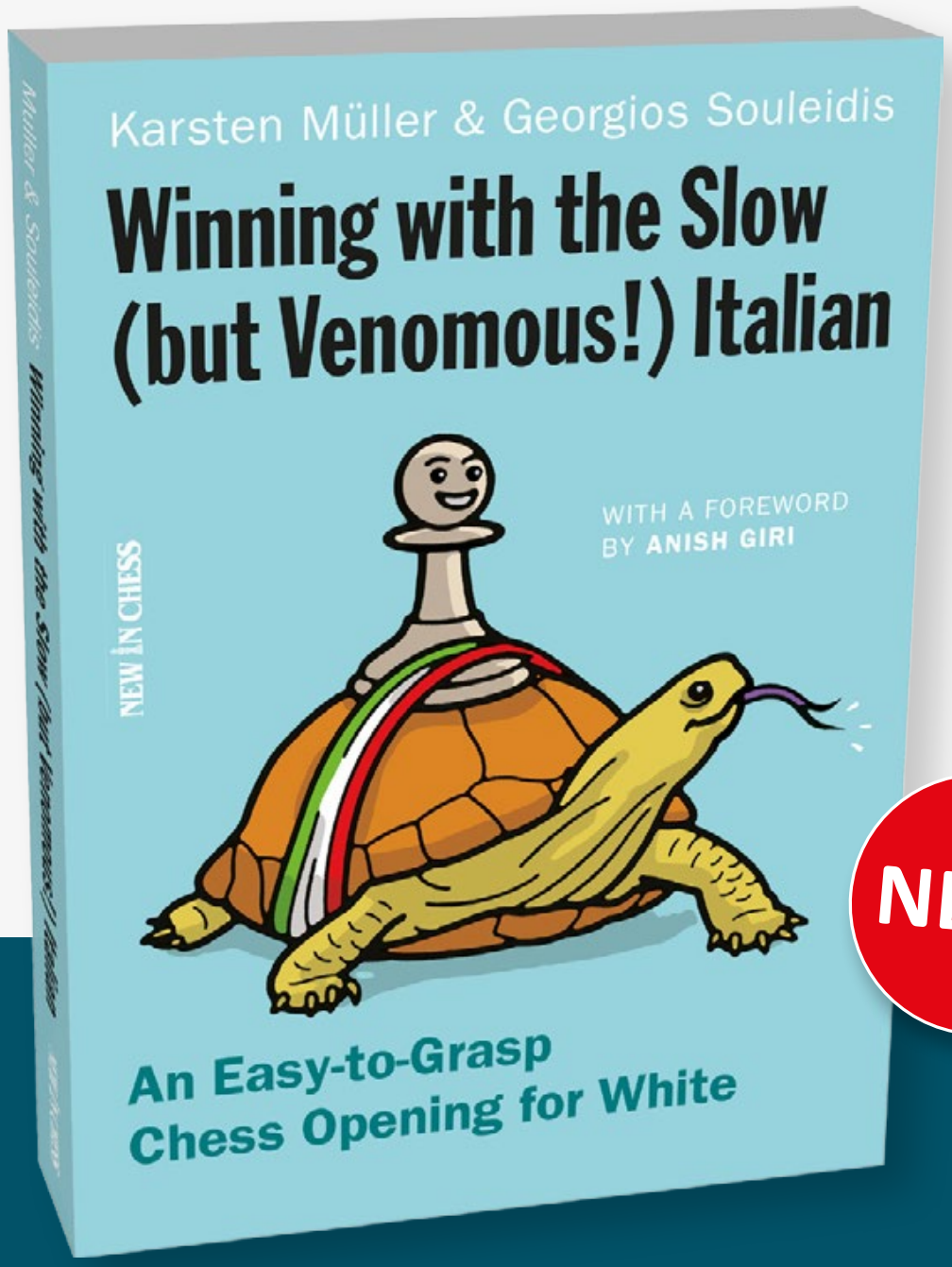
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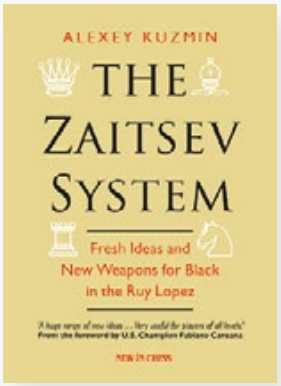

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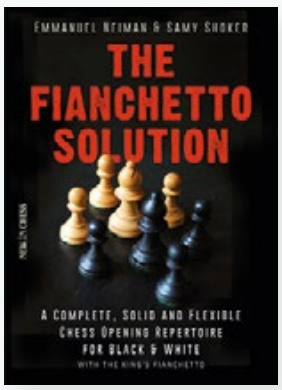
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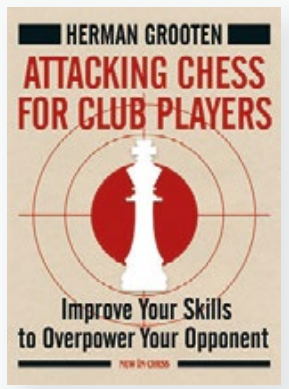

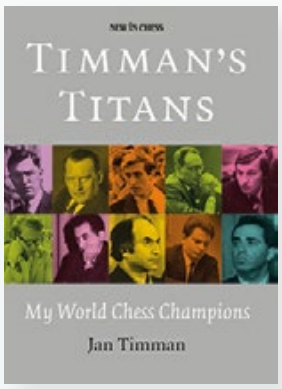

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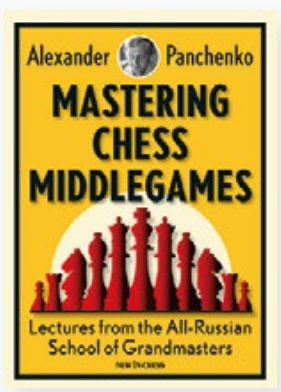

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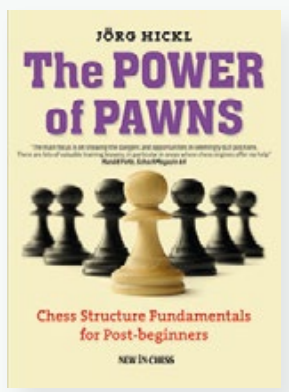
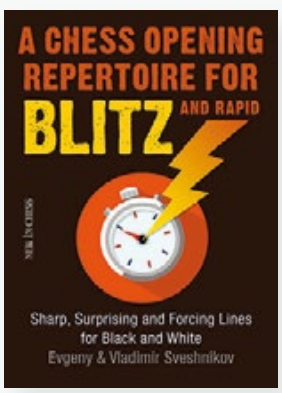
Harald Fietz, SchachMagazin 64

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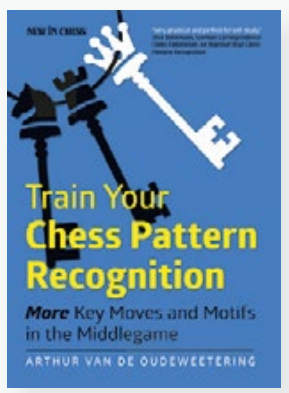

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SINCE MIKHAIL TAL TIME

The Reykjavík Open has been around since 1964, when Mikhail Tal won it with a record 12½ points out of 13 – eight years before Fischer beat Spassky in Reykjavík to become World Chess Champion.

Since then the Reykjavík Open has featured many of the strongest chess players in the world, including Mikhail Tal, Nona Gaprindashvili, David Bronstein, Vasili Smyslov, Bent Larsen, Friðrik Ólafsson, Nigel Short, Hikaru Nakamura, Hou Yifan, Fabiano Caruana, Judit Polgar and Magnus Carlsen.

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PROBABLY THE BEST VENUE

We will never know what Bobby Fischer would have thought of the fabulous new Harpa concert and conference venue by the Reykjavík harbour.

Harpa will however host the 2017 tournament which is expected to welcome more than 200 participants and dozens of Grandmasters with a total prize fund of €15,000 in total prize money. Tal would have loved it.

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ICELAND IN SPRING

The new April date is aimed at giving the players an even better Iceland experience, with warmer temperatures and the island bursting into Spring colors.

NOT JUST CHESS

As in previous years, several chess-related events will take place at the same time as the tournament, including the now famous RO Chess Pub Quiz and the Golden Circle sightseeing tour that includes a stop at Fischer's final resting place.

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Everyone uses ChessBase, from the World Champion to the amateur next door. Start your personal success story with ChessBase 14 and enjoy your chess even more. Available on DVD-ROM or as download.

From "A" for analysis to "Z" for zugzwang: there are in the new ChessBase 14 program a whole heap of improvements which make the entry and analysis of games all the more easy, as they do the production of training or practice material. The new function "Assisted Analysis" is an outstanding example: as you enter a game, whenever you click on a piece an evaluation is produced for all its possible target squares and this is highlighted on the board in colour. Thus even before you play it you can see whether there is a better move than the one you planned. This not only makes entering moves easy, but it also invites you to participate in subtle and continuous calculation training.

Also new in ChessBase 14 is the access to annotated games in the Live Database. In conjunction with a Premium Account you can even find complete analysis of many topical games from the elite tournaments. And because the Live Database has become more and more important in the search for comparable games, now as you play through a game ChessBase 14 updates the search results automatically on every move.

Other improvements: new game notation with diagrams and coloured highlighting in encapsulated variations, one login for all ChessBase servers (playchess, ChessBase Cloud, Let's Check, ChessBase Accounts), analysis of a whole game with rapid error search, saving of the search mask, export of the diagram list as a Word document produces training material in a jiffy, automatic analysis jobs from correspondence games, simplified production of training questions, the search for similar structures now made interactive, replacing games in big databases considerably speeded up, improved search for doubles, easy use of tool to activate Fritz-Trainer and Engines, and much more.

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COVER
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'Raise your standard, progress equals happiness.'

'Mark, tell me, you're older than me, what's the meaning of life?' He wasn't even taken aback by the question, as it was too elementary for him. He just asked back, 'What do you mean what? The meaning of life? It's life! Life itself!' – *Genna Sosonko on Mark Taimanov*

Homer's Mate

Famous for its guest stars, *The Simpsons* – the cult show from Matt Groening that puts the 'fun' in a dysfunctional family – have featured cameos from celebrities the likes of Mick Jagger and Lady Gaga to Leonard Nimoy and Dr. Stephen Hawking. And soon the first 'chess celebrity' will be added to that list by making his cameo appearance: World Champion Magnus Carlsen!
In the season 28 episode 'The Cad and the Hat', that will air in the U.S. on 19 February, it's discovered that, unlikely as this scenario may seem, hapless Homer is something of a chess savant, and he enlists the online assistance of Magnus on his

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laptop to boost his game. Not only that, but even the regulars at Moe's Tavern – in-between swigging their Duff's beer – get in on the chess fever that's set to sweep Springfield, as our exclusive image from the upcoming episode reveals. So everyone standby for chess receiving a major pop culture hit, as our game gets set for the big leap from Simpson's(-in-the-Strand) to The Simpsons! ■

NIC's Café

That's a rap

According to the Hip-Hop Chess Federation, chess and rap have been connected for a long time. In fact, of all the music recorded, they say that no other form of genre has celebrated chess as much as rap. And now there's a new bro in the 'hood making 'chess moves'.

Following his acclaimed debut release 'Rolling Stone' earlier last year, emerging East London rapper Frenzy has been creating a buzz for himself. So much so, that many in the industry have put the Hackney rapper on their 'One to Watch' list for 2017.

Frenzy's end-of-year follow-up release, 'Chess Moves' (produced by Papertoy) has received similar rave reviews. There is, naturally enough, chess imagery in it, and the track was released online for download with the iconic photo of Ray Charles playing chess with his legendary Braille chess set on his tour bus.

One top reviewer wrote that '...[the way] Papertoy flipped the beat on its head at the end of the Chess Moves instrumental is what Grammy-winning songs are made of. Watching the creativeness behind Frenzy's visuals, and also seeing him perform live has been enough to justify that he's not just a rapper, but is the complete artist.'

Judge for yourself, but be warned: don't write in to us complaining about the profanity you'll also hear on it!

The artwork of Frenzy's *Chess Moves*, with an iconic Ray Charles photo.

Building a chess building

Long before he won the world championship crown, in an interview with Ralph Ginzburg for *Harper's Magazine* in 1962, Bobby Fischer declared that he was going to hire the best architect he could find to build him a house in the shape of a rook, where he'd live in for the rest of his life. Bobby never did find that architect, but somehow we feel he would have approved of the artist's impression for the new Fujairah Chess and Culture Club that appeared recently in a major story for *The National* newspaper in the UAE.

Artist's impression of the Fujairah Chess and Culture Club.

'Our members have participated in lots of local competitions and won many prizes but, during the past two years, we started to take part in national and international competitions, received many awards and won the support of the Ruler of Fujairah', said Abdullah Al Barakat, club president.

All of this didn't go unnoticed with the powers that be, and now the Ruler of Fujairah, Sheikj Hamad bin Mohammed Al Sharqi, wants to build – literally – on their success with a new chess-themed clubhouse that will cater for 400 players. The preliminary architect plans show it will be a two-floor building and have four training halls, one main hall to host competitions and a guest room, plus a library and cafeteria – and there will be full-time posts for chess professionals and teachers.

Playing chess with buildings

And that neatly segues to more chess and buildings, with news of a new range of 3D printed chess sets, created by Etsy designer AberuizDesign. They have revamped the chessboard as we know it with 3D printed US city chess sets, that replace the traditional kings, queens, and bishops with 3D printed skyscrapers of famous American cities.

They offer complete sets for the cities of San Diego, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, Seattle, and Los Angeles, with those cities' respective iconic buildings faithfully recreated in nylon powder on a 3D printer. 'Allow the architectural monuments of the city to work together towards checkmate while admiring the new typology', AberuizDesign recommends on their website. 'Buildings were carefully selected that not only represent the city, but that fit well into the game of chess.'

The 3D printed city chess sets cost between $96 and $194 with more cities (and countries) coming, and although you can play using a standard board, there's also a magnetic wooden chessboard with an attractive city map print available that will cost an extra $50.

You're right, this is Dallas!

Lipstick on your c-file

With apologies to Connie Francis for the title (not sure how many of our readers remember her hit single *Lipstick on your collar*), but an ad campaign has come to our

notice that started running recently in *Allure* – the top American women's beauty magazine, published by Conde

Chess-inspired and in lip-smacking colours.

Nast in New York City – for a new chess-themed lipstick collection that promises 'a super velvety matte finish that applies with just one swipe from the black-and-white bullet.'

The collection carries six different colours, each of them named after a chess piece. 'Ruby Red Queen' is a light (not in-your-face) red, and 'Rich Berry King' is a rich berry. 'Deep Plum Rook' is – well, you guessed it – a deep plum, while 'Dashing Mocha Knight' gives you the dark brown, '90s vibes we all seem to be after this past year, so the fashionistas tells us. 'Determined Mauve Bishop' is a pretty, subtle mauve colour, and 'Subtle Nude Pawn' is a classic nude shade, not that we'd know anything about that.

If you're itching to get your hands on these novelty pieces – and in classic makeup hues – you can do so on lipstickqueen.com for $24 each.

Erg Chess

We've covered chess-boxing and diving chess in these pages, so you probably won't fall off your chair if we bring you the latest hybrid fad that combines rowing and chess. Yes, you heard right: rowing and chess. Called 'Erg Chess', it's the invention of Scott McLean, a fitness fanatic and chess addict from The Bolles School, a private college in Jacksonville, Florida.

'I was somewhat inspired when I heard about boxing chess, so I was trying to find a way to apply that to rowing and to basically replace the chess clock with two ergs', said McLean. And you can see it demonstrated on a YouTube video, as the inventor sets up ergs side-by-side with a chessboard in the middle. The rules are simple – you can only row when it's your opponent's move on the chessboard. You win by crossing the finish line, resignation or checkmate; whichever comes first.

Apparently there is a strategy that amounts to this: when you see you're losing at chess, row like crazy. The object is to try to row faster while your opponent is taking their time with their chess moves. 'It kind of presses you to make your decisions quickly and encourages you to pull hard to get the workout in', McLean says.

'When you're losing at chess, row like crazy.'

Turkish (not-so) delight

As if FIDE doesn't have enough troubles with top players dropping out of the upcoming Women's World Championship in Tehran due to the Iranian hijab cover-up laws for women, in early January more disturbing news came as another Muslim televangelist created concerns in Turkey over those who dared to play chess.

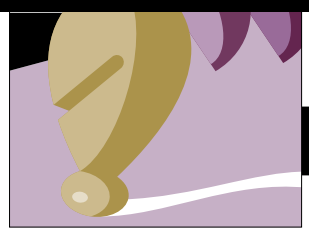
Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü raised eyebrows with his New Year message that claimed playing chess to be more sinful than gambling and eating pork. And for good measure, he further added that 'People who play chess are more prone to lying than others.' He then ended his upbeat message for 2017 by declaring that 'People who play chess are cursed... You should count your prayer beads instead of playing games like this.'

Ünlü's criticism of chess hit the media headlines immediately across all of Turkey, and must have come as a slap in the face for all the hard work being done over the years by the Turkish Chess Federation to promote the game, and they hit back by launching legal proceedings against the religious leader for defamation.

'People who play chess are more prone to lying than others.'

Not only that, but a prominent government minister, Ömer Çelik (see photo below) went out of his way to condemn Ünlü's statement, saying he himself plays and loves chess and advises everyone to do so. 'Chess means the joy of wisdom. Chess is the challenge of wisdom. Chess has been attributed value by eastern culture', Çelik said in a broadcast interview with CNN in Turkey. ■

'Chess means the joy of wisdom.'

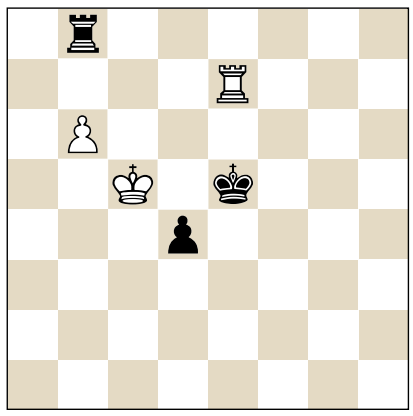


Your Move

Painful memories

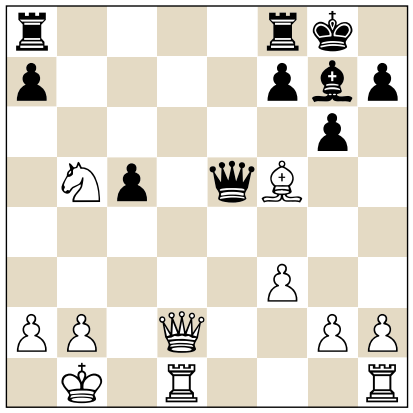
I don't know how it is with other players, but personally I have found that losing a game can generate much stronger feelings than even a brilliant win. Back in the late nineties there was a time when every year GM Robert Hübner would give a simultaneous exhibition in Mikkeli, Finland. That's my hometown, and as a local club player I participated in them four times, from 1997-2000. In one of those four games I got completely and deservedly crushed, but the other three games are much harder to forget.

In the first of them, I, as Black, had managed to find several only moves in a rook ending, reaching this position on the 53rd move:



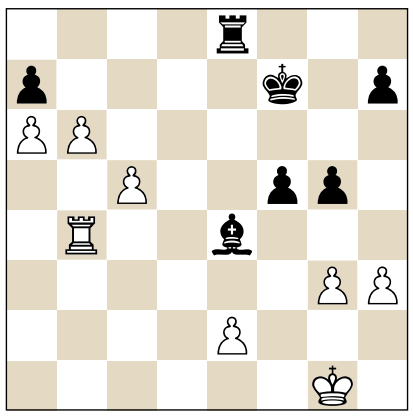
Now, instead of the obvious 53...♔f4, with a trivial draw, I played the terrible 53...♔f6?? and lost after 54.♖d7 ♔e5 55.♖d5+ ♔e4 56.♖xd4+.

In the second game, after 21 moves, we had reached this position (me having Black):



Now after the normal 21...♕xf5+ 22.♔a1 ♖ab8 23.♘c3 Black is somewhat better, though I have no doubt that Hübner would have outplayed me here. Instead of this I chose 21...♖ab8? and after 22.♗d7 went deeper into the abyss by playing 22...♖fd8? (instead 22...a6 23.♖he1 ♕f6 and Black is quite OK) 23.♕c2 a6? (23....c4 in order to give the queen the c5-square was better) 24.♖he1 ♕f6 25.♖d6 and lost soon after.

The worst, however, must have been spoiling a simple win.



Here, as White, I played the unfortunate 42.g4?!. The worst is that I had seen the winning idea, but when Hübner came to my board my hand just played a different move. The move I played does not actually throw away the win, but I totally lost the thread of the position. The game continued 42...♔e6 43.♖d4? (instead 43.gxf5+ would still win easily with the same idea) 43...♖b8 44.gxf5+ ♔e5 45.♖b4?? (45.♖d7 axb6 46.a7 ♖c8 47.cxb6 and White should not lose at least) 45...♗c6 and I went on to lose in the end. In the position, what I had seen but my hand refused to play, was, of course, 42.b7! and Black is forced to go for 42...♔e6 (42...♖b8 43.♖xe4 with 44.c6 to follow) 43.b8♕ ♖xb8 44.♖xb8 ♔d7 45.♖g8 with a win that even I would not have been able to spoil.

Harri Manninen
Jyväskylä, Finland

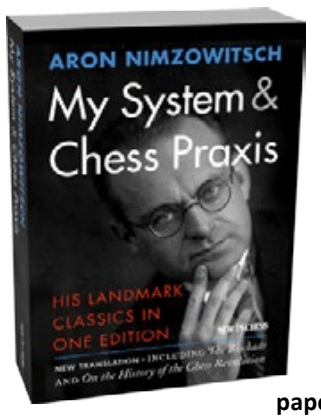
Dramatic similarities

I'm reading the best chess book I've ever read that's not about chess, sort of. *Winter is Coming* by Garry Kasparov, his story of Russia, Putin and the role that the press came to play. The press, controlled by the Communist Government, is suppressing the Democratic Party he was leading. Similarities there are dramatic to the press's influence here in America affecting the recent presidential election.

Roci Cromwell
Sidney, MT, USA

The joy of chess

'Chess is art with truth', as my good friend David Norwood once told me – the stunning last move of the recently



Finally, the translation he deserved

"This translation finally allows English-speaking audiences to acquaint themselves with the real Nimzowitsch."
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"Robert Sherwood has finally succeeded in rendering Nimzowitsch faithfully, something earlier translations have failed to do. His translation is fluent, engaging and a pleasure to read."
John Watson, author of 'Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy'

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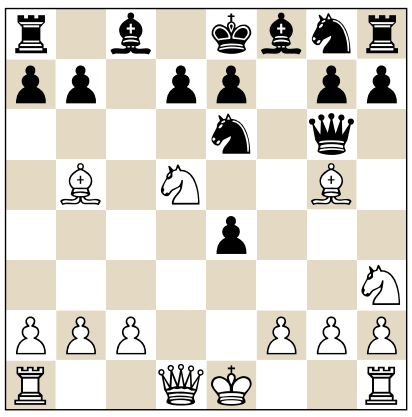
concluded last World Championship match ♕h6+!! is testament to that.

Recently, I was lucky enough to play a five-minute game on the ICC which gave me immense pleasure – I just hope the final position can have a similar effect on you.

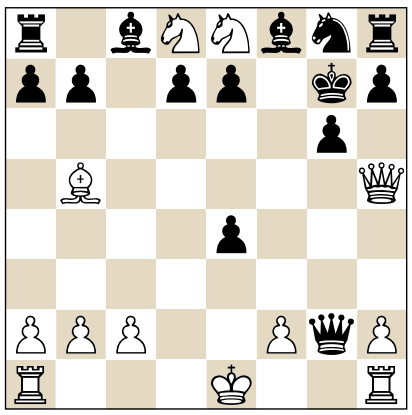
AttackGM (aka Julian Hodgson)
Inmortal (an Argentinian International Master by the name of Gustavo Mahia)

After the game had finished there was something about his handle I quite liked. ☺

1.d4 f5 2.♗g5! What else! **2...c5 3.dxc5 ♘a6 4.e4** A pawn sac for speedy development. **4...fxe4 5.♘c3 ♘xc5 6.♗c4 ♕b6 7.♘d5 ♕c6 8.♗b5 ♕g6 9.♘h3 ♘e6**



10.♘hf4 I had now seen the possibility of the final position looming and was getting very excited! **10...♕xg5 11.♘xe6 ♕xg2 12.♘dc7+ ♔f7 13.♕h5+ g6 14.♘d8+ ♔g7 15.♘e8**



Checkmate – the joy of chess. ☺

The best advice I've ever been given before playing a game of chess was from my wife, 'Play for the love of the game'.

Julian Hodgson
London, UK

New under the sun?

Please allow me a couple of observations regarding New In Chess issue 2016/8.

1. page 13. Not having played a serious game for the best part of half a century I still count myself as a New In Chess reader of club strength.

2. page 45. Magnus Carlsen's mate-in-2 lightning strike 50.♕h6+!! speaks 'chameleon echo' to the chess problem fraternity. The two mates show king and rook first on dark squares h6 and h8, and then on light squares h7 and f7. The effect has long been admired in problems but could be unique in master play.

3. page 18. New In Chess maintains a high standard of English, but occasionally slips up. '... Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's travel expenses, which he used to pay for himself ...' unfortunately allows of two totally opposing interpretations. It is true that 'used to' is often ambiguous in English, but NIC should have taken avoiding action.

4. passim. NIC's general reader is, I very strongly suspect, while very sensible of the influence of the computer on his game, less aware of a sharp distinction that can and should be made between chessplaying computer programs such as Houdini and 'tablebases'.

The former use evaluation functions to end inconclusive analysis while the latter never do, having worked everything out backwards from all positions of checkmate, the only win according to the Laws. This distinction has deep implications which I should like to develop in an article for New In Chess. Are readers interested?

John Roycroft
London, UK

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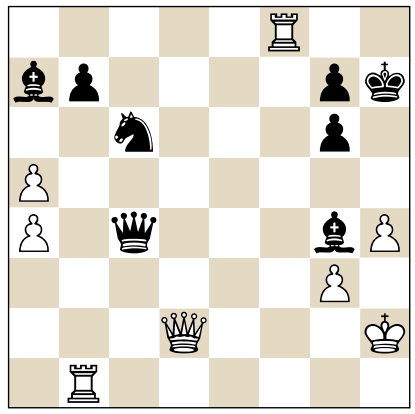
Letters may be edited or abridged

Editorial postscript:

Regarding your second point, we've got news for you. In a qualification tournament for the 1979 Soviet Championship in Beltsy (in Moldova these days), Nikolay Popov (White, rated 2435) and Arkady Novopashin (also rated 2435) reached the following position after 31 moves.



Popov-Novopashin
Beltsy 1979
position after 31...♔h7

And here, Popov uncorked **32.♕h6+** to decide the game! ■

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INFOGRAPHIC

The Decline of Champions

In the London Classic last December, Veselin Topalov had one of his worst tournaments as a professional, losing six games. The result dropped him out of the top 20 in the world rankings, for the first time in more than 20 years.

While it is too soon to say that Topalov will not regain his status as a top player, almost every great champion eventually does go through a decline. (The exceptions are either players who died prematurely or, as in the case of Garry Kasparov, retire while they are still at the top.) Some players experience that decline faster than others, as the following graphic shows.

Most of the data and calculations come from Jeff Sonas of Chessmetrics. Players from before 1970 are not shown because of space limitations and because players from earlier eras had less competition, so it was easier for them to maintain elite status. Some adjustments have also been made, using published FIDE ratings, when there were gaps or anomalies. *DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN*

Players once ranked in top 20 in the world and the number of years it took for each of them to drop out of the top 100

Does not include players who were ranked in the top 20, but who have yet to fall out of the top 100.

	Last date in top 100
Lev Polugaevsky	*Aug. 1994*
Mark Dvoretsky	*Feb. 1979*
Valery Salov	*July 2000*
Boris Spassky	*Jan. 1990*
Henrique Mecking	*Dec. 1980*
Mikhail Tal	*Nov. 1991*
Ratmir Kholmov	*Sept. 1980*
Zurab Azmaiparashvili	*April 2007*
Viktor Bologan	*Sept. 2016*
Leonid Yudasin	*July 1997*
Alexander Khalifman	*July 2008*
Ulf Andersson	*May 2002*
Vassily Smyslov	*Sept. 1990*
Alexey Vyzhmanavin	*Jan. 1997*
Efim Geller	*May 1987*
Anatoly Karpov	*Sept. 2009*
Viktor Kortchnoi	*Jan. 2003*
Artur Jussupow	*Nov. 2002*
Alexander Chernin	*Oct. 2001*
Ljubomir Ljubojevic	*May 1997*
Vladimir Savon	*Mar. 1981*
Florin Gheorghiu	*Nov. 1987*
Predrag Nikolic	*Jan. 2005*
Alexander Beliavsky	*July 2005*
Mikhail Gurevich	*Jan. 2009*
Zoltán Ribli	*April 1996*
Vlastimil Hort	*Feb. 1993*
Jaan Ehlvest	*Jan. 2005*
Lajos Portisch	*Aug. 1998*
Anatoly Lutikov	*Aug. 1976*
Robert Byrne	*Feb. 1984*
Bent Larsen	*April 1991*
Vladimir Epishin	*Jan. 2005*
Victor Gavrikov	*Dec. 1995*
Alexey Suetin	*Sept. 1980*
Konstantin Lerner	*June 1995*
Jeroen Piket	*July 2004*
Jan Smejkal	*Nov. 1986*
Gregory Kaidanov	*Nov. 2003*
Sergei Tiviakov	*April 2015*
Nikolay Krogius	*April 1979*
Michal Krasenkow	*Mar. 2010*
Jan Timman	*Oct 2002*
Vladimir Tukmakov	*Jan. 1999*
Rafael Vaganian	*July 2005*
Jonathan Speelman	*June 2002*
Vladimir Antoshin	*Dec. 1974*
Alexey Dreev	*Oct. 2016*
Mark Taimanov	*Dec. 1983*

	Last date in top 100
Oscar Panno	*July 1983*
Evgeny Vasiukov	*July 1986*
Svetozar Gligoric	*May 1987*
John Nunn	*July 2003*
Simen Agdestein	*Sept. 2000*
David Bronstein	*Sept. 1984*
Kiril Georgiev	*Feb. 2014*
Sergey Dolmatov	*Sept. 2003*
Curt Hansen	*Jan. 2005*
Gyula Sax	*Mar. 1993*
Vitaly Tseshkovsky	*May 1995*
Wolfgang Unzicker	*Feb. 1982*
Milan Matulovic	*Oct. 1982*
Roman Dzindzichashvili	*Dec. 1992*
Raúl Sanguinetti	*May 1979*
Andrey Sokolov	*Oct. 2002*
Miguel Najdorf	*Sept. 1982*
Lubomir Kavalek	*Nov. 1988*
Lev Psakhis	*Sept. 2003*
Sergey Makarichev	*Dec. 1994*
Yasser Seirawan	*Jan. 2005*
Anthony Miles	*Mar. 2001*
Smbat Lputian	*Oct. 2007*
Borislav Ivkov	*May 1982*
Oleg Romanishin	*July 2000*
Samuel Reshevsky	*July 1985*
Robert Hübner	*July 2002*
Wolfgang Uhlmann	*Aug. 1987*
Aleksandar Matanovic	*Oct. 1978*
László Szabó	*Aug. 1977*
Leonid Shamkovich	*Dec. 1982*
Pal Benko	*Dec. 1975*
Viacheslav Eingorn	*Jan. 2004*
Yury Averbakh	*April 1981*
Gennady Kuzmin	*Feb. 1995*
Miroslav Filip	*Jan. 1980*
William Lombardy	*Nov. 1979*
Yury Balashov	*Jan. 2001*
Fridrik Olafsson	*Jan. 1982*
Bobby Fischer	*Aug. 1993*
Ludek Pachman	*April 1980*
Boris Gulko	*Nov. 2001*
Gedeon Barcza	*April 1972*
Evgeny Sveshnikov	*July 1998*
Aivars Gipslis	*Nov 1987*
Vladimir Bagirov	*Oct. 1985*
Iosif Dorfman	*Dec. 2002*
Vladas Mikenas	*Feb. 1972*
Herman Pilnik	*April 1973*
Larry Evans	*Feb. 1981*

Lev Polugaevsky fell out of the top 100 because he had become ill. He died less than two years later. The same thing happened to Mikhail Tal.

Larry Evans had a remarkably long and effective career, winning the United States Championship for the first time in 1951 and for the last (in a tie) in 1980.

Fair & Square

John Rhys-Davies: 'Spying is like a game of chess: sometimes you have to withdraw, sometimes you have to sacrifice one of your pieces to win – preferably a knight rather than a king or queen.'
(The British actor who starred in The Lord of the Rings trilogy, the Indiana Jones films, and the Bond movie The Living Daylights)

Hod Lipson: 'We've seen computers play chess and beat grandmasters. We've seen computers drive a car across a desert. But interestingly, playing chess is easy, but having a conversation about nothing is really difficult for a computer.'
(The American scientist and robotics engineer)

David Davis MP: 'I can only tell you about the opening, not the endgame or the mid-game.'
(The UK Brexit Minister, answering in Parliament to the Brexit committee on triggering article 50)

Ringo Starr: 'I played chess with the roadies all through making that record. There was a lot of time that the geniuses were putting on harmonies and orchestras, so the track would be done as far as I was concerned, and I'd have to wait days to put a tambourine on.'
(The Beatles drummer on the notoriously lengthy recording session involved in the making of 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band')

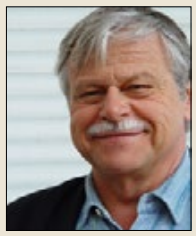
James Altucher: 'I keep track of my blog stats, my Amazon rank, Twitter followers, Facebook likes per posts, my chess ranking. I get stressed when they all don't go up.'
(The American hedge fund manager, entrepreneur, best-selling author, and podcaster)

Marcus du Sautoy: 'Rather than opera, football is more like ballet or a chess game. You can really see it in a team like Arsenal, especially when Dennis Bergkamp was playing. He seemed to be able to read the game like a chessboard and knew where a player would be several seconds later and put the ball there for him.'
(Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford)

Adam Ross: 'In a crazy way, writing is a lot like any kind of very complex game – like chess, where you have the knowledge as you're composing all of the ramifications of each move, of each choice you make.' *(The American novelist and short story writer)*

Eliot Hearst: 'Chess masters as well as chess computers deserve less reverence than the public accords them.'
(A contemporary of Bobby Fischer and former US team captain who went on to become an eminent US professor of psychology)

Charles Buxton: 'In life, as in chess, forethought wins.'
(The English brewer, philanthropist, writer and Member of Parliament, 1823-71)



Vlastimil Hort: 'Who are your friends? I think we are like gladiators. That is the best way to put it. Somehow we believe we are the best, "the champion". I don't believe this is a kind of friendship.' *(Interviewed by Tibor Karolyi for the Legendary Chess Careers series)*

Jordana Spiro: 'I used to play chess when I was a kid and participate in national-level tournaments with the geekiest guys. This one time, I was losing terribly, so I batted my eyelashes and flirted as I asked for a draw. My dad just couldn't believe it. He thought, "What have I created, a floozy?" But it worked!' *(The American film and television actress, best known for starring in TV hits My Boys and The Mob Doctor)*

Brian Eno: 'Classical – perhaps I should say "orchestral" – music is so digital, so cut up, rhythmically, pitchwise and in terms of the roles of the musicians. It's all in little boxes. The reason you get child prodigies in chess, arithmetic, and classical composition is that they are all worlds of discontinuous, parceled-up possibilities.'
(The multi-talented British musician, composer, record producer, singer, writer and visual artist)

Close, but no cigar

Vassily Ivanchuk and **Sergey Karjakin** are the new Rapid and Blitz World Champions

After the World Championship match in New York had ended in a spine-tingling 6-6 deadlock, Magnus Carlsen decidedly retained his title in the rapid play-off. In Doha, Qatar, the Norwegian tied for first in both the Rapid and the Blitz World Championship, but this time there were no play-offs and the tiebreak rules decided in favour of the delighted veteran Vassily Ivanchuk and the perhaps even happier Sergey Karjakin. **SIMEN AGDESTEIN** reports from the Qatari capital.

The outcome of the Blitz World Championship can be read from the faces of Sergey Karjakin and Magnus Carlsen, who will soon rush off stage annoyed by a shower of golden confetti. On the right chief organizer Mohamad Al Modhiaki.

At the prize-giving of the World Rapid and Blitz Championship, Magnus Carlsen looked like he'd just lost a game against Sergey Karjakin in the World Championship in New York, or as if something else horrible had happened, whereas in fact there really wasn't that much to complain about. Coming second in the blitz and third in the rapid didn't fulfil every dream of Magnus for 2016, but it nevertheless completed another great year and highlighted Magnus's status of the planet's best player, even in the absence of Fabiano Caruana, Vladimir Kramnik and Wesley So, his closest rating rivals. His scores were fine, with 10 out of 15 in the rapid and 16½ out of 21 in the blitz. It was just that the tiebreakers were not on his side this time.

His performance also earned him a sum of close to 70,000 dollars, which would be an enormous amount for most of the other participants, but may have just a barely noticeable impact on Magnus's economy. Just appearing for the event probably already left him with a nice sum, as in Qatar there seem to be solid appearance fees for the star. It was rumoured that Kramnik was paid a hefty incentive to take part in the Qatar Open a couple of years ago, and Magnus' worth cannot be less, as Magnus's manager, my brother, will surely have argued.

For the others, the event that started immediately after Christmas mostly created a deficit of 2,000 dollars or more. The playing venue and the hotel facilities were all fantastic, but you had to dig a bit in your wallet to afford it. As for myself, I had no ideas or hopes of winning anything, but I surely don't regret the investment. It was an experience just to see Doha and learn about this peculiar little country. There are only about 300,000 inhabitants, but with all the foreigners working there, the total population is over two million. In the beginning, I enthusiastically collected taxi drivers from different countries and got Ghana, the Philippines, Egypt, Bangladesh, Sudan and Sri Lanka, until suddenly Nepal outnumbered everyone else and I lost interest.

‘Ivanchuk seemed to be more interested in talking about checkers and happier that he had found a checkers club in Doha than about winning.’

I had heard that you couldn’t bring a female companion unless you were married, but I am not sure how strict the rules really are. Most of the women we saw, and people in general, were wearing ordinary clothes with no hiding of their hair or faces. The Qataris themselves, on the other hand, were very distinct by wearing their wonderful white costumes. Those are the managers, we learned, while all the foreigners are doing the ‘blue-collar’ work. Being a native Qatari is like being born with a silver spoon in your mouth. If you need money, you just ask the king, we heard, and when you marry you are granted a house.

The country seems to be overflowing with money, with lots of spectacular buildings and enormous shopping malls with ice-skating rinks and rollercoasters. You could even have an indoor Venetian boat ride if you wanted. As for the outdoor activities, I restricted myself to a desert safari, which means rushing around in the sand in a four-wheel-drive with a local driver who seemed to love to scare the living daylights out of us by sliding down steep hills and doing other tricks with his car.

I walked around on ‘The Pearl’, an artificial peninsula that has come up lately with the most luxurious marina I have ever seen. We also passed a Rolls Royce shop and a Ferrari shop. I almost wondered why they charged us for anything at all if they already had that much money.

One evening I managed to have a small drink, which is not easy in Doha. Alcohol is prohibited for the inhabitants, but by showing your passport you could have whatever you wanted at the Sheraton hotel and a few other places. I don’t know if such things matter for entering the next floor in the afterlife, but the puritan style surely made for a very pleasant atmosphere in the town. Crime seemed non-existent. You could safely walk around anywhere anytime. If the rumours were right, just driving through a red light would risk you ending up in jail. Drug smuggling is punishable by death.

In this light, I must admit I was a bit nervous about doing something wrong, and when my computer suddenly collapsed, I seriously wondered if I was punished for having visited sites I wasn’t allowed to go to. As NRK, the Norwegian Broadcasting company, experienced, the censorship in the country is quite strict. It required quite some work to clear out everything before they could transmit it all to Norway.

The organization, headed by GM Mohamad Al Modiahki, was impressive in every way. True, Magnus didn’t like the golden confetti falling over the prize winners at the end and just left in anger waving his hand, but to everyone else I believed this just topped a great event.

However, I regret that no Israeli players were there, just like I regretted not playing in the Olympiad in Dubai in 1986 for the same reason. Norway and a handful of other countries boycotted that Olympiad, but the problems for Israelis to enter this part of the world were not on the agenda this time. The only ripple on a perfect façade now seemed to be Magnus’s anger at the end.

LENNART OOTES

Flowers still in hand, Vassily Ivanchuk has rushed back from the prize-giving to attend to more important business: finishing a checkers game against Baadur Jobava with a nice combination.

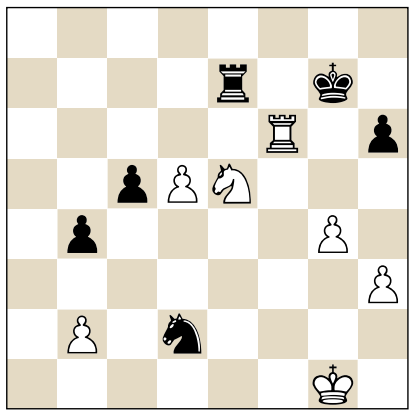
On closer investigation, Magnus could be excused a bit. Actually, he expressed satisfaction after the rapid event. ‘I can’t complain’, he said to the Norwegian press, although it must have been a bit annoying to finish third on tiebreak. The system now is that the average rating of your opponents is the first factor in case of a tie, and after Magnus’s poor start, his road was markedly easier than that of gold winner Vassily Ivanchuk and silver medallist Alexander Grischuk, whose opponents averaged 2747 and 2740, whereas Magnus’ opponents only averaged 2701. Although the score was equal, the difference in opposition was clear. ‘I can only congratulate Ivanchuk. If there is

anyone I wish to score such a success, it would be him. He's been a class player for the last 30 years. He really deserves this,' Magnus generously said on the Norwegian broadcast.

The Norwegian fans know enough about the chess world these days to appreciate the victory of the eccentric Ukrainian. As usual when Magnus is playing, all games were broadcast live to enormous interest. It's really incredible, but chess has become perhaps the most popular TV-sport in Norway. The World Championship in New York was gigantic, and so was this event.

Before the prize-giving, Ivanchuk was filmed, deeply involved in a game of checkers against Baadur Jobava. Suddenly he had to run to get his prize, and during the ceremony we could clearly see that Ivanchuk had thought up some clever line while on the podium, because as quickly as he could he ran back to complete the game, to the great enthusiasm of the spectators around their board. In the winner's interview with FIDE's press officer Anastasiya Karlovich, Ivanchuk seemed to be more interested in talking about checkers and happier that he had found a checkers club in Doha than about winning. 'I was extremely lucky', he said, and it's true that there were some lucky moments.

Vishy Anand
Vassily Ivanchuk
Doha World Rapid 2016 (14)

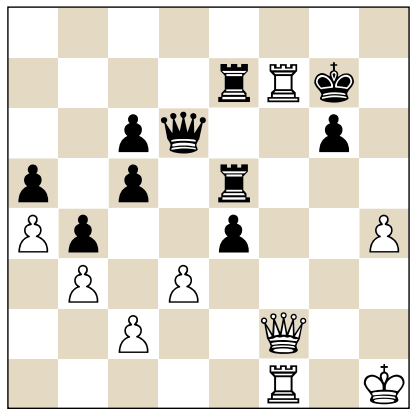


position after 60...♔g7

61.♖f5?? Correct was 61.♖g6+ ♔f8 (61...♔h7? 62.♖e6!), and now after 62.♘c6 or 62.♘d3 White is clearly better. **61...♖xe5!** Thanks! Without this gift there would have been no gold medal! 0-1.

Here comes another one:

Vassily Ivanchuk
Maxim Matlakov
Doha World Rapid 2016 (2)



position after 55.♖f7

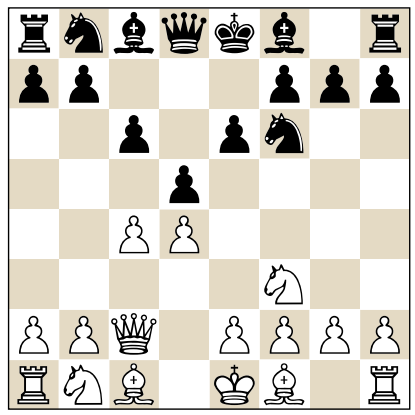
55...♔g8?? 55...♖xf7 may have looked dangerous, but it wasn't. After 56.♕xf7+ ♔h8 57.♖f6 ♕e7 58.♕xg6 ♕g7 it should be a draw. Now it's mate instead.
56.♖f8+ ♔g7 57.♕f7+!
1-0. A rook comes to h8 with mate.

However, beating Carlsen surely wasn't a lucky break for Ivanchuk, who would repeat the feat in the blitz. Here is the rapid game with notes by Anish Giri.

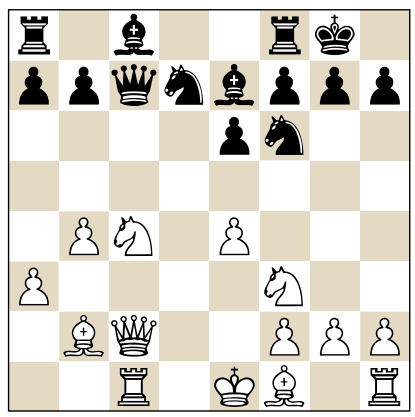
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Vassily Ivanchuk
Magnus Carlsen
Doha World Rapid 2016 (7)
Slav Defence

Ivanchuk actually has a pretty decent score against Carlsen these days. Carlsen's blitz loss in Berlin (the city, not the opening) in last year's Rapid and Blitz World Championship has turned into a meme and in Doha, too, the veteran beat the champ in both disciplines. Must be some genius-to-genius thing. I don't really know!
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6
Carlsen has been playing the Slav lately, which he seems to have prepared for the World Championship match against Sergey Karjakin.
4.♕c2 e6



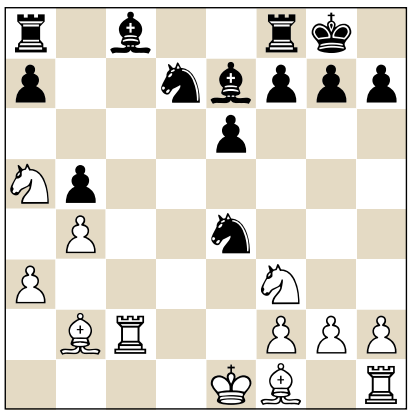
A sub-line within a sub-line is a common occurrence in Carlsen's games.
5.♘bd2 dxc4 6.♘xc4 c5 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.a3 The position looks rather dry, potentially, so Ivanchuk decides to play it very ambitiously, postponing kingside development and thus castling.
8...0-0 9.b4 ♗e7 This natural, almost automatic move turns out to be slightly inaccurate. 9...b5! could have followed in a classical game or from a more Kasparovian player.
10.♗b2 ♕c7 This queen x-ray turns out to be counterproductive. 10...b5 is now well met by 11.♘a5!.
11.♖c1 ♘bd7 12.e4!? The timid 12.e3 or 12.g3 would have given White some small pressure, but this move is the most critical one.



12...b5?!

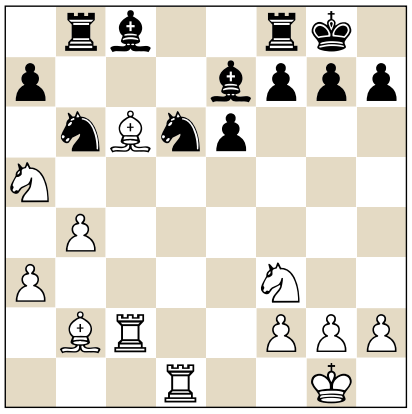
The arising endgame is bad for Black. 12...a5! is a brilliant resource. The endgame is now a lot better for Black than in the game, as the c6-square is covered. Now 13.b5!? maintains the pressure, while after 13.♘xa5 ♕xc2 14.♖xc2 ♘xe4 the position looks better for White, but in fact Black is totally fine, for example: 15.♗d3 ♘dc5!? 16.♗b5 ♗d8!.

13.♘a5 ♕xc2 14.♖xc2 ♘xe4



15.♗xb5 The other pieces must have been jealous of the f1-bishop. It enters the game with a bang!

15...♘d6 16.♗c6 ♖b8 17.0-0 ♘b6 Black is trying to somehow finish his development, but it's clear that something will be lost on the way, especially in a rapid game, when there is no time for machine-like precision. **18.♖d1** This natural move is not the most accurate one, since it allows 18...♗a6!.



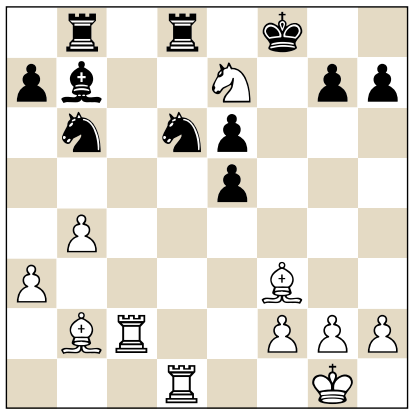
18...♖d8? Just envisioning a fork on c6 should discourage any player from making such a move. That said, the way to punish this move is not at all obvious.

18...♗a6! would have kept the game very much going.

19.♘e5! f6 20.♗f3! fxe5 21.♘c6

Even 21.♗xe5! is crushing.

21...♗b7 22.♘xe7+ ♔f8

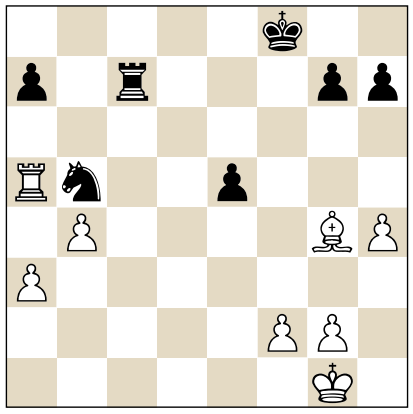


23.♗xe5! And after a long think Carlsen realized that he would just end up a pawn down.

23...♘bc4 23...♔xe7 is met by 24.♖c7+ and 23...♗xf3 by 24.♖xd6 ♔xe7 25.♖c7+.

24.♗xd6 ♘xd6 25.♘c6 ♗xc6 26.♖xc6 The rest of the game is a matter of technique, and Ivanchuk was up to the job.

26...♘b5 27.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 28.♖a6 ♖c8 29.h4 ♖c7 30.♗g4 e5 31.♖a5



One more pawn falls.

31...♘d6 32.♖xe5 ♘c4 33.♖f5+ ♔e7 34.♖f3 ♘e5 35.♖e3 ♔d6 36.♗e2 h6 37.f4 ♖c1+ 38.♔f2 ♘d7 39.♗f3 ♖c2+ 40.♔g3 ♖a2 41.♖d3+ ♔e7 42.♖c3 ♔d8 43.♔g4 ♖d2 44.♖c6 ♖d3 45.♖a6 ♘f6+ 46.♔f5 ♖d7 47.g4 ♘e8 48.g5 hxg5 49.hxg5 ♘d6+ 50.♔g6 ♘b5 51.♖a5 ♘d4 52.♗g4

Black resigned. Looks easy, but go and try it yourself!

■ ■ ■

Doha 2016 World Rapid

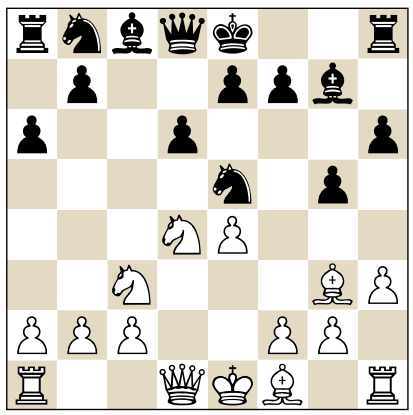
					TPR
1	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2771	11	2747
2	Alexander Grischuk	RUS	2767	11	2740
3	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2906	11	2701
4	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2805	10	2738
5	Yu Yangyi	CHN	2743	10	2724
6	Ian Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2812	10	2713
7	David Anton	ESP	2605	10	2669
8	Santosh Gujrathi Vidit	IND	2643	9½	2758
9	Levon Aronian	ARM	2770	9½	2749
10	Leinier Dominguez	CUB	2803	9½	2711
11	Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son	VIE	2685	9½	2689
12	Farrukh Amonatov	TJK	2693	9½	2665
13	Ivan Cheparinov	BUL	2699	9½	2645
14	Anton Korobov	UKR	2714	9	2743
15	Li Chao	CHN	2648	9	2733
16	Vishy Anand	IND	2802	9	2707
17	Dmitry Jakovenko	RUS	2699	9	2674
18	Hrant Melkumyan	ARM	2736	9	2664
19	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2806	9	2651
20	Andrei Volokitin	UKR	2650	9	2627
21	Surya Shekhar Ganguly	IND	2631	9	2618
22	Hristos Banikas	GRE	2647	9	2586
23	Bu Xiangzhi	CHN	2663	8½	2732
24	Alexander Riazantsev	RUS	2671	8½	2701
25	Cristobal Henriquez	CHI	2449	8½	2692
26	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2795	8½	2689
27	Olexandr Bortnyk	UKR	2678	8½	2682
28	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2839	8½	2674
29	Ernesto Inarkiev	RUS	2707	8½	2672
30	David Howell	ENG	2671	8½	2661
31	Rauf Mamedov	AZE	2670	8½	2634
32	Alexey Dreev	RUS	2705	8½	2617
33	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	POL	2721	8½	2609
34	Adhiban Baskaran	IND	2645	8½	2604
35	Giga Quparadze	GEO	2637	8½	2578
36	Wei Yi	CHN	2609	8	2731
37	Sergei Zhigalko	BLR	2728	8	2660
38	Teimour Radjabov	AZE	2788	8	2652
39	Vladimir Akopian	ARM	2698	8	2650
40	Nikita Vitiugov	RUS	2648	8	2649
41	Evgeny Tomashevsky	RUS	2710	8	2645
42	Vladimir Malakhov	RUS	2721	8	2642
43	Bassem Amin	EGY	2691	8	2642
44	Maxim Matlakov	RUS	2662	8	2629
45	Vladislav Artemiev	RUS	2723	8	2628
46	Rinat Jumabayev	KAZ	2611	8	2626
47	A.R. Saleh Salem	UAE	2694	8	2625
48	Peter Leko	HUN	2692	8	2592
49	Daniil Dubov	RUS	2716	8	2579
50	Ahmed Adly	EGY	2627	8	2578

106 players, 15 rounds

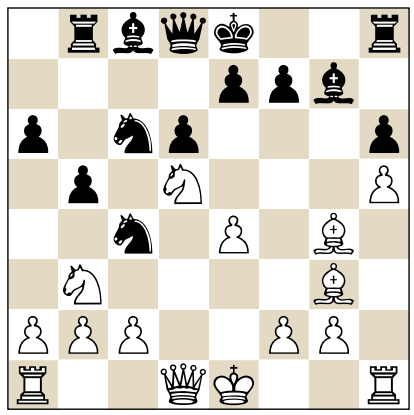
Scrolling through the games of the silver medallist in the rapid, I actually cannot find any big blunders. Was he the only one not giving away something serious at any time? His victory against the Frenchman with three (or even more?) names was sweet.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Alexander Grischuk
Doha World Rapid 2016 (14)
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

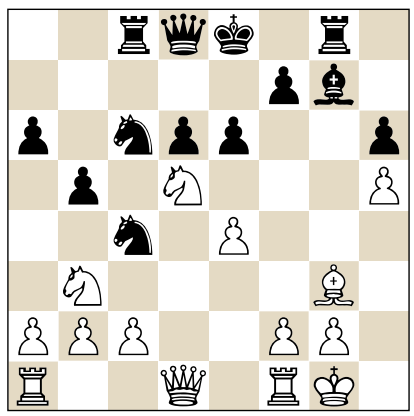
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 ♘g4 7.♗g5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♗g3 ♗g7 10.h3 ♘e5



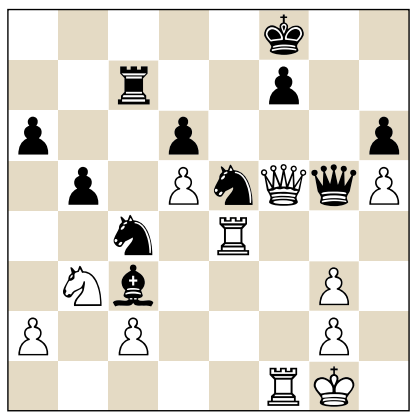
11.h4!?
A new try in this position, but one that I don't think will find a place in history.
11.♘f5 and 11.f3 are the normal moves.
11...♘bc6 12.♘b3
12.♘f5 is still possible, but now Black can play 12...♗xf5 13.exf5 ♘d4!?.
12...g4 13.h5
I guess this was the point. The g4-pawn looks like a vulnerability.
13...♖b8
The point must be 13...b5 14.a4 b4 15.♘d5, and Black's activity stops.
14.♗e2 14.a4 was not great, but possible.
14...b5 15.♘d5 15.a4 ♘c4! is another story now.
15...♘c4!
Black can just let go of the g-pawn, since he now gets lots of great squares for his minor pieces.
16.♗xg4



16...♖g8!
Not the only move, but it's nice to see how Grischuk gets his two rooks into play.
17.♗xc8 ♖xc8 18.0-0 e6



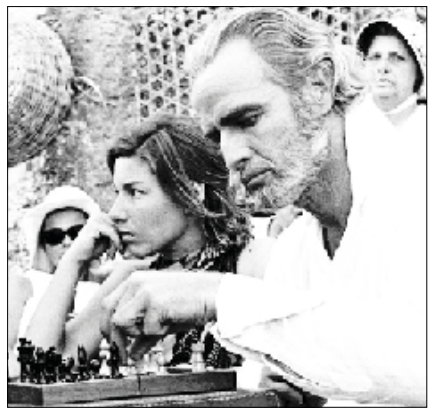
19.♖e1?
Such things might work in blitz sometimes, but not here.
19...♗xb2 20.♖b1 ♖xg3
20...exd5 was also good, but this completes the picture of total dark-square control.
21.fxg3 exd5 22.exd5+ ♘6e5 23.♕g4 ♔f8 24.♕f5 ♗c3 25.♖e4 ♖c7 26.♖f1 ♕g5



And Black won easily with his enormous pieces. 0-1 after 34 moves.

Celeb 64

John Henderson



Marlon Brando

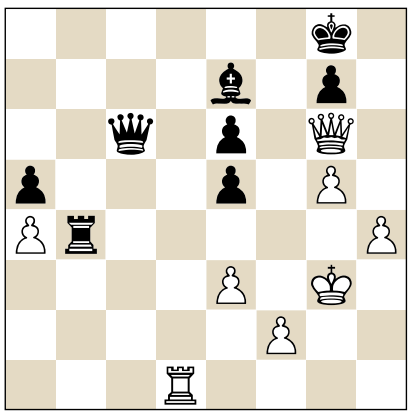
'I coulda' been a contender.' So goes one of the most memorable movie quotes of all-time from *On the Waterfront*, with Marlon Brando in one of his most powerful screen performances. But in-between filming, it's a fair bet this Hollywood legend coulda' been a contender for a game of chess with one his co-stars.
Brando almost always played chess between scenes on the movie sets. It all started in 1952, when he was photographed studying a chess position between scenes while filming *Julius Caesar*. The following year, in 1953, while filming *The Wild One*, again he would often be found playing chess. This led to Brando being invited several times to Humphrey Bogart's house, where the two movie icons would play chess for hours on end.
Perhaps inspired by Bogart in *Casablanca*, Brando also introduced chess scenes into his own movies. In 1962 in *Mutiny on the Bounty*, as Fletcher Christian, he would sit in front of a chess board in his cabin, studying some positions, and likewise in 1989 in *A Dry White Season*, where his lawyer character, Mr. McKenzie, studies a chess position at his desk.
In a 1980 *Playboy* interview, his chess-sparring partner from *The Formula*, co-star George C. Scott, said that Brando wasn't really all that good, and that he never lost to him. And Brando also had a habit of whenever he lost, of knocking all the pieces off the board and say, 'I'm bored.' ■

MARIA EMELIANOVA

In the blitz game against Karjakin, Carlsen kept a lost game going till move 97. Just before he was mated the Norwegian fighter even tried to claim a draw because of the 50-move rule, but it wasn't even close.

Magnus didn't start well. In the first round, he was lucky that Surya Ganguly failed to see a forced mate in three or the simple win on the next move.

Magnus Carlsen
Surya Shekhar Ganguly
Doha World Rapid 2016 (1)

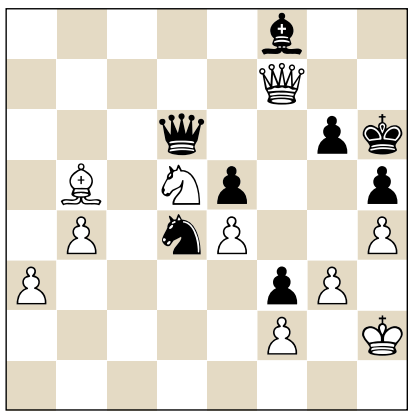


position after 36.♕g6

36...♖xa4? It's still winning, as it has been for quite a while, which may be why the Indian was lulled into relax mode and failed to see the mate 36...♖g4+ 37.♔xg4 ♕g2+ 38.♔h5 ♕f3 mate.
37.h5 ♕c4? Black suddenly has to be precise and find 37...♕e4! 38.♕xe6+ (38.♖d8+ ♗xd8 39.♕e8+ ♔h7 40.g6+ ♔h6 41.♕h8+ ♔g5, and Black's king is fine) 38...♔h7, and it should be over soon. Actually, 37...♖g4+ is still working, as 38.♔xg4 ♕g2+ 39.♔h4 ♕xf2+ 40.♔g4 ♕e2+ wins back the rook without giving either a perpetual or the crucial a-pawn.
38.♖d8+! Magnus, of course, sees the miracle that appeared to him.
38...♗xd8? Ganguly seems to be in shock. He could still have played on with 38...♗f8 39.h6 ♕h4+ 40.♔g2 ♕e4+ 41.♕xe4 ♖xe4 42.h7+ ♔xh7 43.♖xf8, and Black is still clearly better.
39.♕e8+ ♔h7 40.♕g6+ ♔g8 ½-½.

In the next round, against the Georgian Levan Pantsulaia, Magnus was not so lucky.

Levan Pantsulaia
Magnus Carlsen
Doha World Rapid 2016 (2)

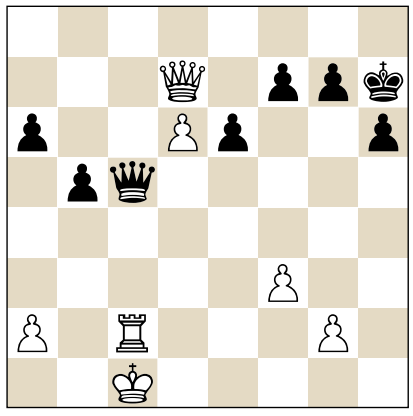


position after 44...♘d4

45.♘f6! The finish of a total onslaught. **45...♗g7 46.♕xg7+!** 1-0.

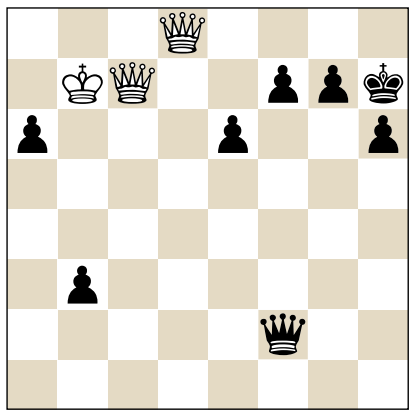
In the remaining games, however, we saw Magnus from his very best side, winning one apparently equal endgame after the other in familiar style. I liked the following king march.

Magnus Carlsen
Dmitry Jakovenko
Doha World Rapid 2016 (8)



position after 43.♖c2

43...♕g1+? The last few moves were all about trying to find shelter for the white king. The computer sees that 43...♕e3+ is a forced draw, but this is not for humans, at least not with so little time.
44.♔d2! ♕xg2+ It's tempting to grab some pawns on the way, but the only relevant point here is whether White's monarch will be able to get away or not.
45.♔c3 ♕xf3+ 46.♔b4 ♕e4+ 47.♔a5! ♕xc2 48.♕c7! ♕xa2+ 49.♔b6 Black is five(!) pawns up, but it won't help, since White's last one has advanced a lot further than Black's six. **49...♕f2+ 50.♔b7 b4 51.d7 b3 52.d8♕**

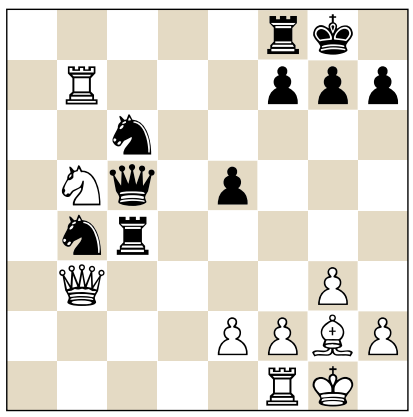


I happened to pass by here and was stunned. Six pawns for a queen, how often do you see that?
52...♕f5 53.♕c3 1-0.

Magnus was standing aside and was bubbling with anger. 'This is one of the stupidest things I've ever seen. It's madness.'

In the blitz, it was very much about not blundering pieces. I don't know how many pieces I gave away, but for a while I thought I was the number one in this competition. Still, scanning through the top games I must say that even the very best have their share of gigantic mistakes. Magnus seemed to have shaken off all the rust from the rapid and started off with 3½ out of 4 and brilliant play, until suddenly the following happened:

Magnus Carlsen
Sergey Karjakin
Doha World Blitz 2016 (5)

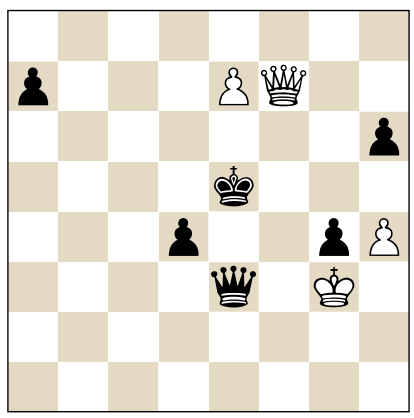


position after 19...♘ec6

The position is messy, especially if Magnus plays 20.♘d6!?, but he was only eyeing the centre and didn't see Karjakin's threat.
20.e3?? ♘a5! 21.♕xc4 ♕xc4 This hammer blow did not quite kill Magnus, who actually managed to keep the fight going till move 97. Just before he was mated in a queen versus rook ending, he even tried to claim a draw because of the 50-moves rule – a real fighter never gives up! – but it wasn't even close.

After this loss everyone in the hall could hear Magnus swearing from his private lounge above the stand. He said that he didn't know it resounded that loudly, as if that would have stopped him. He was also furious when Radoslaw Wojtaszek threw away half a point in the following position in the penultimate round:

Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Sergey Karjakin
Doha World Blitz 2016 (20)

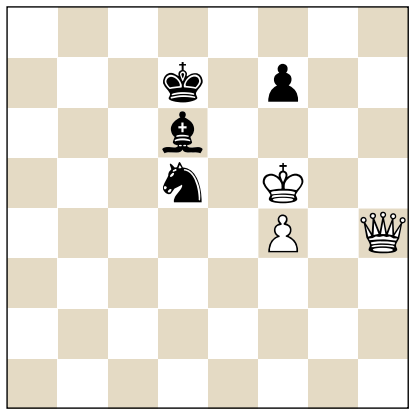


position after 56...♕e3

57.♔g2? 57.♔xg4 ♕e2+ 58.♕f3 h5+ 59.♔g3 ♕e1+ 60.♕f2 ♕c3+ 61.♔h2 wins easily and would have meant victory for Magnus even before the last round.
57...♕e2+ 58.♔g3 ♕e3+ 59.♔g2? Magnus was standing aside and was bubbling with anger. 'This is one of the stupidest things I've ever seen. It's madness. Complete madness. It's not possible to throw away that', he said angrily on TV just after the final round, explaining his bad mood. It was perhaps good that he hadn't seen how clearly Wojtaszek had been winning earlier in the game.
59...♕e2+ 60.♕f2 ♕e4+ 61.♔g3 ♔d6! I presume this came as a shock. The e-pawn is suddenly under control.
62.♕f6+? 62.e8 ♕xe8 63.♕xd4 is still a draw. **62...♔d7 63.♕xh6?** Here comes the final moment that upset Magnus so much.
63...♕e3+! 0-1.
Black controls White's pawns, while the opposite is not the case.

To put the story in perspective a bit, Karjakin gave away a whole point some rounds earlier by blundering a queen against Hikaru Nakamura.

Sergey Karjakin
Hikaru Nakamura
Doha World Blitz 2016 (15)

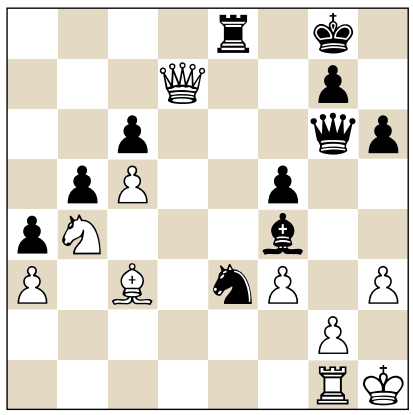


position after 68...♔d7

69.♕g4?? This should have been an easy white win some moves ago, but now both f-pawns are about to go, which would make for an interesting situation with bishop and knight against queen, however, with the light pieces badly coordinated, it should be winning for White. Instead Karjakin blew it all in one move.
69...♘e3+ 0-1.

Overall, I believe that Karjakin received more points than he gave away. It seemed as if Alexander Morozevich had just nailed the final blow in the following position.

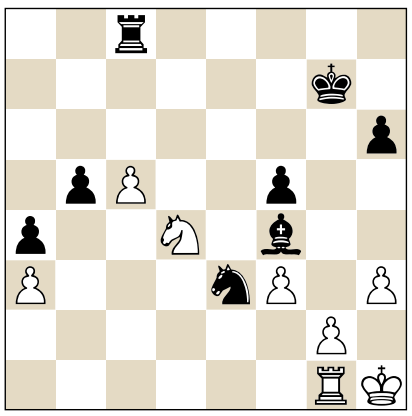
Sergey Karjakin
Alexander Morozevich
Doha World Blitz 2016 (13)



position after 49.♕d7

49...♕g3! 50.♕xg7+ The only way to

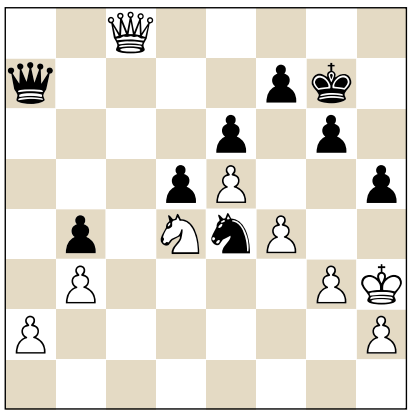
prevent mate, but resigning seemed just as appropriate.
50...♕xg7 51.♗xg7 ♔xg7 52.♘xc6 ♖c8 53.♘d4



53...♖xc5?? 'My god!' I thought as I happened to see this.
54.♘e6+ ♔f6 55.♘xc5 ♗d6
Incredibly enough, the position is still complex, and after a total mess the game actually ended in a draw.

Maybe Karjakin's luckiest moment came against Saleh Salem, the United Arab Emirates' top GM.

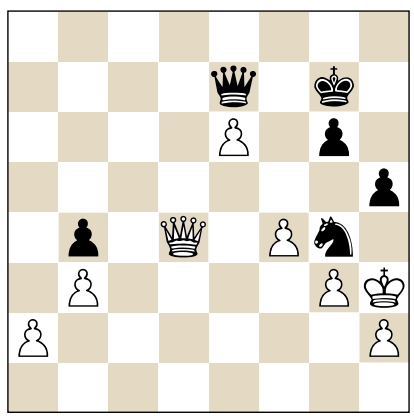
Sergey Karjakin
A.R. Saleh Salem
Doha World Blitz 2016 (10)



position after 34...♔g7

35.♘xe6+ White's only chance.
35...fxe6 36.♕xe6 ♕b7 37.♕e8 d4 38.e6 It's not that simple, actually. White's pawn has suddenly become annoying. It's not easy to discover the elegant manoeuvre 38...♔f6! or, even stronger, 38...♘f2+ 39.♔h4 ♔f6!, killing the e-pawn and, with it, all hopes.
38...♘f6 39.♕d8 d3 40.♕xd3

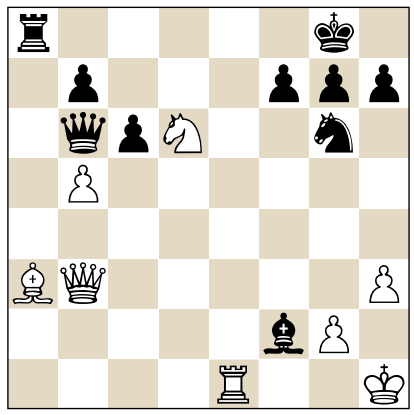
Now Karjakin had the chance to equalize with 40.e7, but with only two seconds to think per move, it's unfair to judge things in an ordinary way.
40...♕e7 41.♕e3 ♘g4 42.♕d4+



42...♔f8??
The win was not simple any longer, but this was a true gift. It was definitely good Magnus didn't see this one!
43.♕h8 Mate.

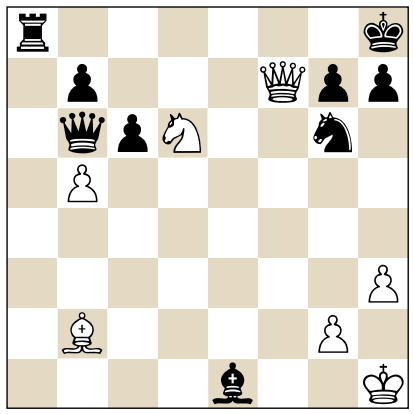
Karjakin said he was very proud of his game against Peter Leko in Round 19 and thought he had played brilliantly. Leko begged to differ.

Sergey Karjakin
Peter Leko
Doha World Blitz 2016 (19)



position after 25.♔h1

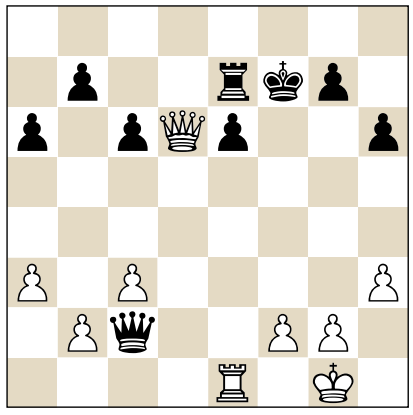
The key moment of the game. It is indeed remarkable that the rook cannot be taken.
25...♗xe1?? In fact, 25...♕c7 would be fine for Black. **26.♕xf7+ ♔h8 27.♗b2!**
Surprisingly, there is no way for Black to defend this position. His pieces are completely uncoordinated.



27...♖g8 28.♘f5! 1-0.

'I actually played a crucial role in the final outcome', Leko told me afterwards. Perhaps it was only fair that he gave away half a point against the other gold medal contender in the final round.

Peter Leko
Magnus Carlsen
Doha World Blitz 2016 (21)

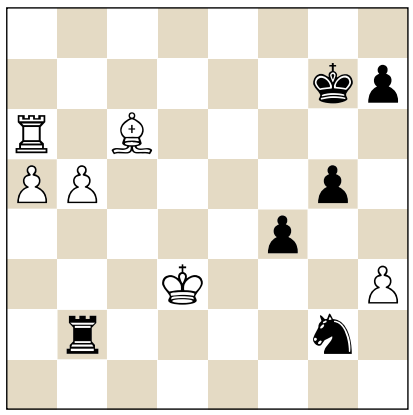


position after 35...♕c2

36.♕f4+? After 36.♖e3 Black would be dead lost.
36...♔g8 37.♕b4 ♖f7 38.♕b6 ♕d2 39.♖xe6
Now Magnus had just enough for a draw.
39...♕c1+ 40.♔h2 ♕f4+ 41.♔g1 ♕c1+ 42.♔h2 Draw.

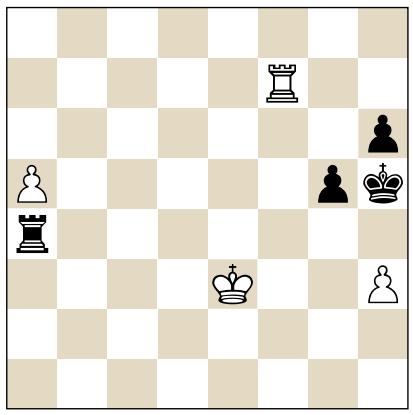
Baadur Jobava also played a crucial role towards the end against our 'friends'. In Round 18 he was completely winning against Magnus. You could hear him whispering to himself: 'Why didn't I play ♔c3?' for the rest of the tournament. And that could absolutely have been the final move in that game.

Baadur Jobava
Magnus Carlsen
Doha World Blitz 2016 (18)



position after 41...♘xg2

42.♗xg2?
Now it becomes more complicated. 42.♔c3 is game over.
42...♖xg2 43.b6 ♖b2 44.♖a7+ ♔g6 45.b7 f3 46.♖a6+
Again 46.♔c3! would have won the game.
46...♔h5 47.♖f6
Perhaps the Georgian had missed 47.♖b6 f2 and Black queens with check.
47...♖xb7 48.♖xf3 ♖b3+ 49.♔e4 ♖b4+ 50.♔e3 ♖a4 51.♖f7 h6



52.♖a7? The roles have certainly been reversed. Now it's White who has to fight for a draw. It's there with 52.♖f6! ♖a3+ (52...♖xa5 53.♔f3 is simpler) 53.♔e4 ♖xh3 54.♖f3! ♖h4+ 55.♔f5, and White gets the rook behind the pawn. But this is impossible to see with no time.
52...♖a3+ 53.♔e4 ♖xh3 54.a6 ♖a3 55.♖a8 ♔g4 0-1.

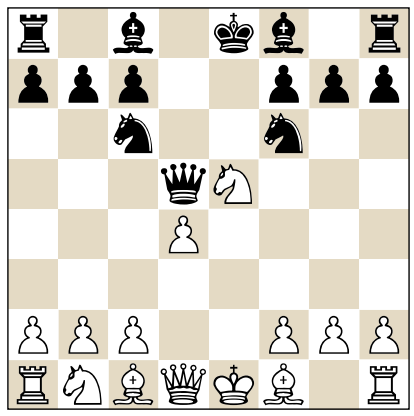
In the final round, Jobava came up with the following interesting idea:

MARIA EMELIANOVA

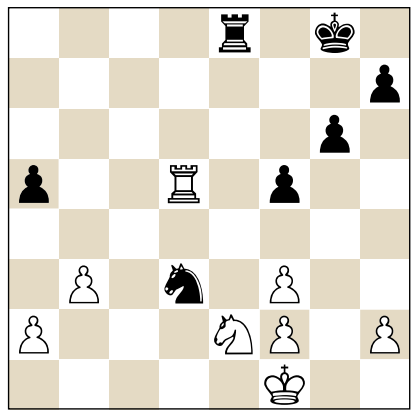
Baadur Jobava played a pivotal role in the blitz. The creative Georgian lost a winning position against Carlsen and here he resigns his game against Karjakin after blundering a piece.

Sergey Karjakin
Baadur Jobava
Doha World Blitz 2016 (21)
Petroff Defence

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d5!? 4.exd5 ♕xd5 5.d4 ♘c6!?



It's really impressive to find such ideas, especially when they're not totally stupid. Even the computer recognizes it as playable.
6.♘c3 6.♘xc6 ♕xc6 7.♘c3 ♗b4 gives Black great development.
6...♕xd4 7.♘xc6 ♕xd1+ 8.♘xd1 bxc6
And this was only slightly better for White.
Many moves later Jobava made the day complete for Karjakin with a little blunder.

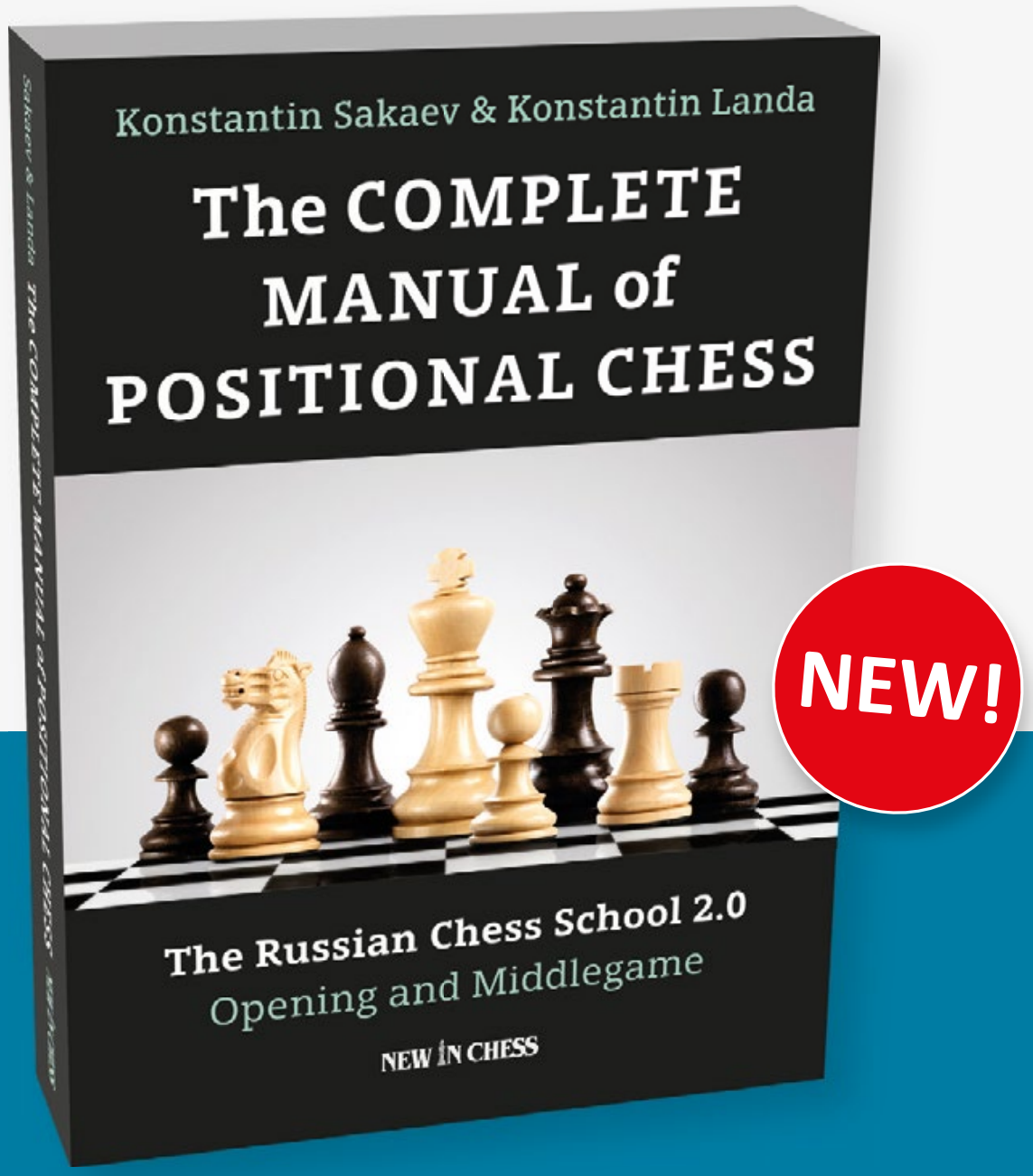


position after 31.♘e2

31...♖xe2? After 31...♘e5 there's still a lot of work to do.
32.♖d8+! A classic intermediate check. **32...♔f7 33.♔xe2**
And White won.

With this win Karjakin secured the World Championship title by virtue of a four-point rating performance lead over Magnus. Magnus's high rating was worth more than Karjakin's when counting their opponents' rating average. Whether this is a good way to decide a World Championship is debatable, of course, but it wasn't really a good reason for Magnus to grouch. I think he generally played great chess, and he could have decided it without the help of others, for instance by playing 52...♘b7 in the following position:

Probably the most thorough grounding in the history of teaching chess



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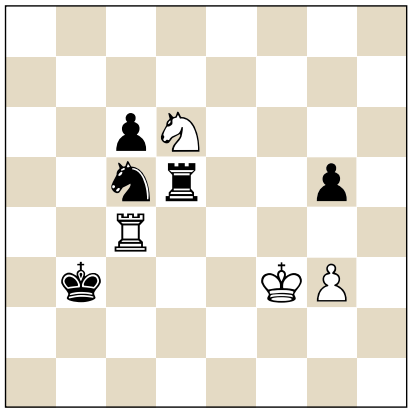
Hikaru Nakamura
Magnus Carlsen
Doha World Blitz 2016 (14)

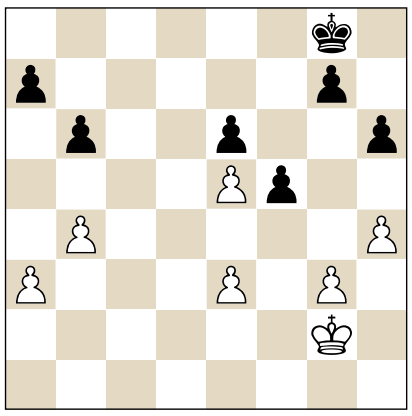


position after 52.♔f3

52...♘d7? 53.♖xc6! This didn't have the same effect, as 53...♘e5+ 54.♔e4 doesn't win. **53...♖d3+ 54.♔e4 ♖xg3 55.♘f5 ♖c3 56.♖xc3+** Draw.

The following pawn endings, however, have the trademark Magnus stamp on them.

Hrant Melkumyan
Magnus Carlsen
Doha World Blitz 2016 (6)

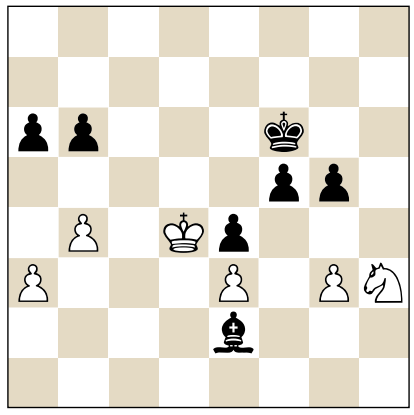


position after 52.fxe3

'It's completely equal, which means that Magnus will win,' I remember Kramnik commenting once. This is just what happened here, too, but not without some help from his opponent. **52...♔f7 53.♔f3 ♔g6 54.e4??** 54.b5 is a dead draw, since 54...♔h5 55.♔f4 leads nowhere. **54...fxe4+ 55.♔xe4 ♔h5!** Now it's suddenly winning for Black. **56.♔f3 b5 57.♔f4 g6 58.♔f3 g5 59.hxg5 hxg5** 59...♔xg5 is winning, too. **60.♔f2 ♔g4 61.♔g2 ♔f5** 0-1.

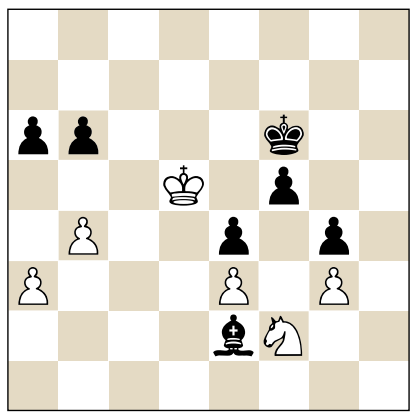
And this one was particularly nice. Anish Giri gave his comments on the final moves.

Alexander Riazantsev
Magnus Carlsen
Doha World Rapid 2016 (13)

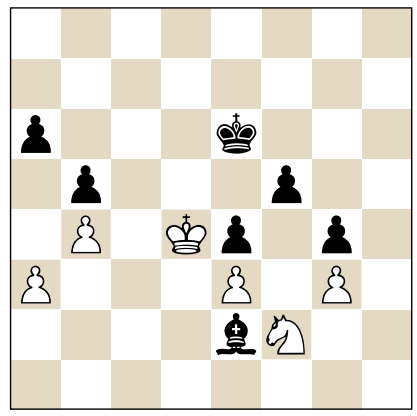


position after 47...b6

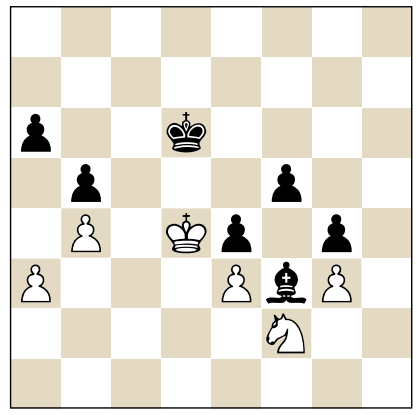
48.♘f2 Carlsen relied on his endgame technique for the bigger part of both the rapid and the blitz championship. Of course, it wasn't flawless, mathematically speaking, but assuming there was no supernatural assistance, it did look impressive. Perhaps the prettiest was this one.
48...g4!! You can like the guy or hate him, but you can't avoid putting a double exclam here. You have to be a good wood-pusher to spot this move, but to play it as if it's the most normal thing, with just a couple minutes left on the clock, that's just class. Absolutely counterintuitive at first sight, one can quickly see that the f2-knight is totally and completely dominated by Black's pawns and the bishop. Eventually a zugzwang, followed by an f4! break, will win. The other nice thing is that this is probably the only way for Black to win.
49.♔d5



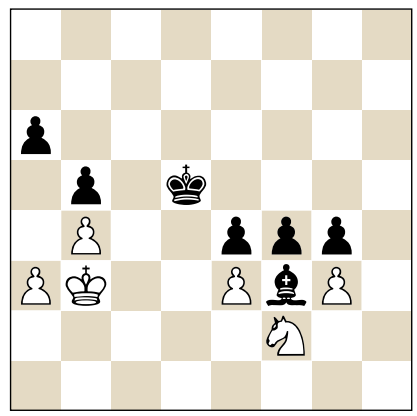
49...b5(?) Unfortunately this move could have spoiled it 49...♗f3 would keep the option of an extra tempo with Black. Carlsen must have thought it was classier to stop any queenside counterplay (which comes too slow anyway) and only then execute the zugzwang.
50.♔d4 ♔e6



51.♘h1? And here White had 51.♔c3!! ♔d5 52.♔d2 ♗f3 53.♔c3, and this is a mutual zugzwang. Nor is there a triangle in sight: 53...♔e5 54.♔d2! ♔e6 55.♔c2= (55.♘d1!?=), or 53...f4 54.exf4 e3 55.♘d3=.
51...♗f3 52.♘f2 ♔d6



The first zugzwang. The knight on f2 has literally no moves. **53.♔c3 ♔d5** The second zugzwang. **54.♔b3 f4!**



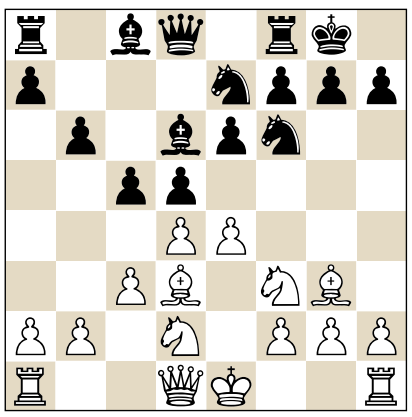
And the rest is straightforward.

55.gxf4 g3 56.♘h3 ♔e6 57.♔c3 ♔f5 58.♘g1 g2 59.♔d2 ♔g4 60.♔e1 ♔g3 61.f5 ♗g4 62.f6 ♗h5 0-1. Nice!

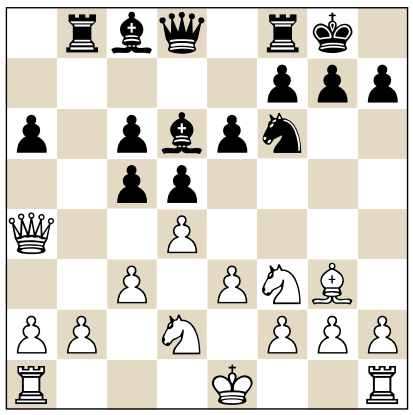
Beating the previous classical World Champion as easily as in the following game, must also have given Magnus great pleasure.

Magnus Carlsen
Vishy Anand
Doha World Blitz 2016 (20)
Queen's Pawn Opening

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗f4!?
Somehow this has become the big fashion these days. Also players like Karjakin and Grischuk played it in Doha with great success.
2...d5
I'm stunned, but in my base I find almost 40 games with Baadur Jobava after 3.♘c3. Interestingly he even got a winning position against Magnus with it, but Magnus likes to play this line with the pawn to c3.
3.e3 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘d2 e6 6.♘gf3 ♗d6 7.♗g3
It's hard to believe that this slow line will have enough venom to be popular for very long, but Magnus scored 2/3 with in Doha and should have won the one he lost.
7...0-0 8.♗b5 a6
8...♘e7 9.♗d3 b6 10.e4 happened in the two other games:



10...dxe4 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♗xe4 ♖b8 13.dxc5 ♗xg3 14.hxg3 f5 15.♕xd8 ♖xd8 16.c6! ♘d5 17.♗xd5 ♖xd5 18.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 19.♔xd1 ♗a6 20.♘e5 ♖c8 21.c4 was a total disaster for Marin Bosiocic and the game was over in just a few more moves.
Anton Korobov managed to beat Magnus after 10...♗xg3 11.hxg3 dxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘g6 13.dxc5 ♗b7!? 14.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15.cxb6 e5 16.♗xg6 hxg6 17.♕d7? ♕xb6 18.♘g5?? ♗xg2 19.0-0-0 ♖ab8 20.b3 ♕xf2 21.♕g4 ♖fc8 22.♔b1 ♖xc3 23.♕b4 ♖cc8 0-1, but White could have just played 17.bxa7, with a materially winning position.
9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.♕a4!?
In last year's World Blitz Championship Magnus suffered a painful defeat against Karjakin with 10.♘e5 ♕c7 11.♘d3 c4 12.♗xd6 ♕xd6 13.♘c5 e5. The control of c5 proved worth less than Black's activity in the centre and on the kingside.
10...♖b8



11.♕a3! A cute idea. It's diagonal pins like a cross.
11...♗xg3 12.hxg3 cxd4?! Sethuraman played the better 12...♕b6 13.0-0!? ♘d7!, and Black soon managed to trade off both his c-pawns.
13.cxd4 a5 14.0-0 ♕b6 15.b3
Now it's a positional catastrophe already with the backward c-pawn.
15...♗a6 16.♖fc1 ♘d7?
A simple blunder. The computer actually says the position is not so bad for Black after the surprising 16...♘g4 or simply 16...♗b5, and Black holds on.
17.♕d6!
Now it all collapses.
17...♕a7 18.♖xc6 ♗b5 19.♖c7 ♖b7 20.♖ac1 a4 21.♖xb7 ♕xb7 22.♖c7 ♕b8 23.♖xd7 ♗xd7 24.♕xd7 1-0.

Doha 2016 World Blitz

					TPR
1	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2800	16½	2740
2	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2873	16½	2735
3	Daniil Dubov	RUS	2724	14½	2733
4	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2842	14½	2720
5	Alexander Grischuk	RUS	2761	14½	2718
6	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2823	14	2708
7	Leinier Dominguez	CUB	2783	13	2725
8	Anton Korobov	UKR	2666	13	2708
9	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2754	13	2697
10	Vishy Anand	IND	2754	13	2695
11	Peter Leko	HUN	2697	13	2678
12	Ian Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2830	13	2677
13	A.R. Saleh Salem	UAE	2636	12½	2767
14	Wei Yi	CHN	2636	12½	2722
15	Baadur Jobava	GEO	2752	12½	2700
16	Yu Yangyi	CHN	2712	12½	2688
17	Alexander Riazantsev	RUS	2678	12½	2663
18	Vladimir Onischuk	UKR	2740	12½	2634
19	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	POL	2666	12	2712
20	Bu Xiangzhi	CHN	2613	12	2706
21	Maxim Matlakov	RUS	2668	12	2689
22	Teimour Radjabov	AZE	2800	12	2671
23	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2813	12	2670
24	Vladislav Artemiev	RUS	2847	12	2668
25	Mikheil Mchedlishvili	GEO	2509	12	2668
26	Li Chao	CHN	2632	12	2658
27	Arkadij Naiditsch	AZE	2647	12	2656
28	Levon Aronian	ARM	2830	12	2633
29	Rauf Mamedov	AZE	2770	12	2632
30	Alexander Morozevich	RUS	2684	11½	2723
31	Benjamin Bok	NED	2630	11½	2670
32	Rustam Khusnutdinov	KAZ	2624	11½	2656
33	Ivan Cheparinov	BUL	2661	11½	2654
34	Ernesto Inarkiev	RUS	2605	11½	2645
35	Hrant Melkumyan	ARM	2712	11½	2636
36	Paco Vallejo	ESP	2648	11½	2623
37	Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son	VIE	2648	11½	2616
38	Evgeny Tomashevsky	RUS	2756	11½	2597
39	Nikita Vitiugov	RUS	2682	11½	2594
40	Parham Maghsoodloo	IRI	2585	11½	2542
41	Surya Shekhar Ganguly	IND	2546	11	2706
42	Marin Bosiocic	CRO	2659	11	2701
43	Ahmed Adly	EGY	2733	11	2654
44	Vladimir Malakhov	RUS	2672	11	2634

108 players, 21 rounds

Magnus is obviously very popular in Norway, but Karjakin's star has also risen, thanks to his modest and charming behaviour at the press conferences in New York. Despite all our nationalism, I think many Norwegians actually thought it was quite OK that Karjakin drew the longest straw

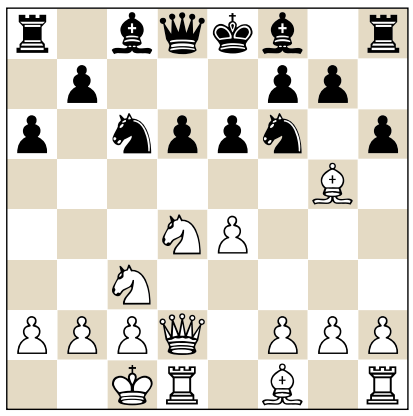
this time. Karjakin's tweet afterwards, with a picture of himself with the gold medal between his teeth – 'Not this time, Mr. Carlsen!' – was also received with a smile.

Let's finish with another win by the new Blitz World Champion, this time against his former compatriot and current Rapid World Champion Vassily Ivanchuk.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

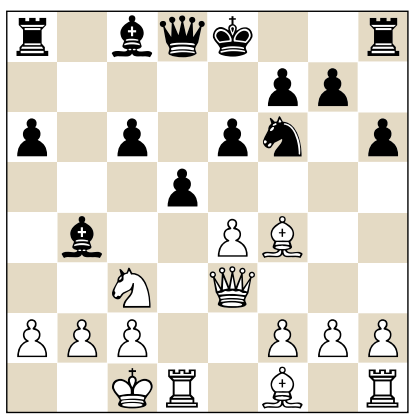
Sergey Karjakin
Vassily Ivanchuk
Doha World Blitz 2016 (17)
Sicilian Defence, Richter-Rauzer

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 h6



For some reason this old line has gained some sort of mini-popularity lately for absolutely no reason that I can see.

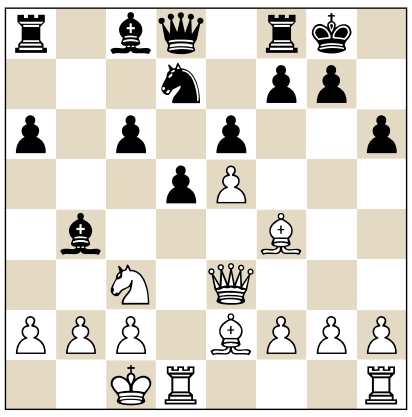
9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.♗f4 d5 11.♕e3 ♗b4



How Sergey Karjakin celebrated his world title on Twitter. His text with the first photo: Not this time, Mr. Carlsen! On his birthday, January 12, the Russian posted a photo of a cake showing the final position of their blitz game.

12.♗e2 12.a3 ♗a5 13.♗e2 0-0 14.e5 ♘h7? was seen in a game Carlsen-Henriquez. I don't know what Black is hoping for, giving up the c5-square so easily. The least you can do is get mated after 14...♘d7!.

12...0-0 13.e5 ♘d7 Risky, but what to do? 13...♘h7 is safer, but then Black lacks control of the vital c5-square.

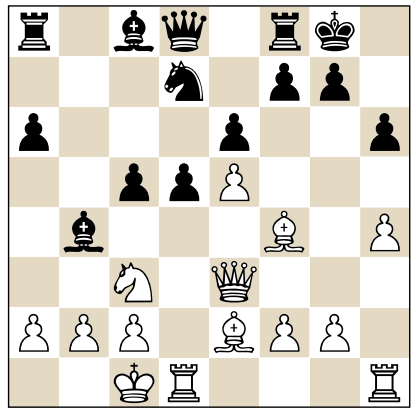


14.h4 14.♗xh6 very likely doesn't lead to more than a draw after 14...♗xc3!?, avoiding a ♖d4 intermezzo.

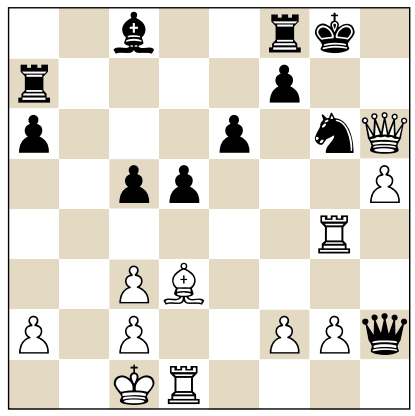
14.♕g3 is the most common move in the position.

14...c5?

Ivanchuk has a penchant for provocations, but unlike in the past, in these modern days such tricks, especially if unprepared, work less and less often. 14...f6! would have been safer, when White would have to think what to do, since ♗xh6 is no longer so attractive.



15.♗xh6! Boom! **15...gxh6 16.♕xh6 ♘xe5 17.♖h3** Ivanchuk started thinking hard here, but it is already too late. **17...♗xc3 18.bxc3 ♖a7 19.♖g3+ ♘g6 20.h5 ♕h4 21.♖g4 ♕h2 22.♗d3**



Black lost on time and position. ■

Lust for Life

Mark Taimanov, who died last November 28 at the age of 90, had more than one gift. At the peak of his career, he was not only one of the leading Russian chess grandmasters, he also met international acclaim as a pianist in a duo with his first wife Lyubov Bruk. **GENNA SOSONKO** remembers a man with an unshakeable passion for life. A man who married four times and became the father of twins when he was 78. But also a grandmaster, who despite all his successes will live on as the Soviet chess player who was humiliated 6-0 by Bobby Fischer.

Mark Taimanov (1926-2016)

On his return to Moscow from Vancouver, after his crushing 6-0 loss to Bobby Fischer in the Candidates Quarter Final match, Mark Taimanov was stopped by the head of customs at Sheremetyevo airport. As the official rummaged through his luggage, he picked out a book, *In the First Circle*, a novel by dissident writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Feigning sympathy, the official frowned. 'Why are you so careless, Mark Yevgenievich? If you'd played better against Fischer I'd have carried the complete works of Solzhenitsyn to your taxi...'

From that May day in 1971 a new life started for Mark Yevgenievich Taimanov. In the twilight of his life,

DAGOBERT KOHLMEYER

Happy as always. Mark Taimanov and his fourth wife Nadya at the Hostdans tournament in Copenhagen in 1997.

remembering those days, he said, 'If you asked me which of all the events in my chess career I consider to be the main one, the most dramatic and memorable, I'd reply without hesitation the quarter-final match for the World Championship with the great American grandmaster. The results of that duel provoked a chain of unpredictable events that caused dramatic changes in my chess and even my personal life for many years.'

When Robert Fischer became Taimanov's opponent after the Interzonal tournament in Mallorca in 1970, many people sympathized with him. Almost all his colleagues were also pessimistic about the Soviet grandmaster's chances. But not all of them. As Mikhail Tal wrote later: 'Although before the start of the match the majority of experts preferred Fischer, there were connoisseurs to be found who thought Taimanov had certain chances. In particular, Botvinnik expressed the opinion that a Fischer victory was by no means guaranteed. I must admit that I also shared that point of view.'

In his public appearances Botvinnik went even further: he forecast a victory for Taimanov, basing this on the fact that the Soviet grandmaster had a large amount of match experience. And besides, Fischer, who hadn't even finished school, had no chance of becoming World Champion: his lack of education would make itself felt.

Taimanov himself was unusually optimistic before the match. Despite the American's resounding successes, he preferred to remember their game in Buenos Aires in 1960, where first he got a winning position against the 17-year-old lanky teenager, and then, although he didn't manage to win, forced Bobby to balance on the edge of the abyss for a long time. And Taimanov also had a superior position at first at the Interzonal in Mallorca, where he eventually lost.

The practical side of the matter wasn't forgotten either. 'We'll get a new flat thanks to Fischer!' he explained to his wife, justifiably believing that the government would spare no expense on the battle with the American. He indeed got an addi-

tional flat to 'prepare for the match without interference', but the order for it was taken from him when he returned from Vancouver.

Although Fischer's path to Olympus had only just started, the tense relations between the Soviet Union and the United States made any match between a Soviet grandmaster and the American a political event. The state really did spare no expense, and when Taimanov left for Canada the Sport Committee even promised that he could keep the entire prize-money for himself as long as he showed worthy play. Considering the fact that Soviet grandmasters always had to give the lion's share of their foreign currency to the state, this was a demonstration of extraordinary generosity.

A year before Taimanov's match Botvinnik had been supposed to play Fischer. The negotiations with the Dutch organizers went a long way, and Botvinnik was completely ready for the duel. At the last moment the match didn't take place, and he gave his expanded 'dossier' on the American to Taimanov. Besides purely technical recommendations, Botvinnik drew attention to the fact that Fischer, like Euwe and Smyslov, had a penchant for long queen moves, and he advised Taimanov to keep an eye on the mobility of that piece in his opponent's armoury. The Patriarch's rationale for this wasn't an ordinary one: 'Those grandmasters are very tall, so they need a lot of space.'

To eliminate a flaw that had been peculiar to Taimanov since his childhood – a reflex reaction, a quick 'natural' move in response to his opponent's move – Botvinnik advised him to put an egg timer next to the chess board during his training games, and under no circumstances to make a move until the one-minute quantity had poured from one bulb into the other. He also recalled Tarrasch's old advice to sit on your hands to mechanically prevent impulsive movements, and stop your hand from overtaking your thinking.

Taimanov really wanted to take Tal to Canada as his assistant, but the Patriarch was categorically against this: 'You're both inclined towards a bohemian lifestyle, you'll be hanging out at night, drinking vodka... no, and again no!' And Taimanov, biting the bullet, listened to Botvinnik, although later he regretted it. Yuri Balashov, Yevgeny Vasyukov and Alexander Kotov were sent to Vancouver with him.

We won't spend time on the course of the match that unfolded dramatically for Taimanov, but will only say that Taimanov didn't manage to take advantage of either the Patriarch's fruits of his opening preparation or his advice – in the fifth game an impulsive move he made turned out to blunder a rook. Apologizing to Botvinnik for not having managed to use his 'wise advice', Taimanov himself gave an honest explanation of his devastating loss: 'It didn't only depend on me.'

The devastating defeat and final score of 6-0 was so stunning that Tal remarked, 'It's like some kind of tennis score!'

An unprecedented loss

The Soviet press didn't know how to react to the sensation in Canada. The match was best of 10, and when the score was 5-0 in the American's favour, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* wrote that 'all the quarter-final matches are over except for the Taimanov-Fischer match, after the end of which the name of the next semi-finalist will be known.'

The devastating defeat and final score of 6-0 was so stunning that Tal remarked, 'It's like some kind of tennis score!' The chairman of the Soviet Chess Federation, Dmitri Postnikov, was less diplomatic: 'Soviet chess players have never before experienced such a disgraceful failure!' And Minister of Sport Pavlov wrote to the Central Committee of the Communist Party: 'an unprecedented loss by a Soviet chess player'.

The Soviet Union was proud of its hegemony in the chess world, and suddenly an eccentric American appeared, announcing to all and sundry that he was the strongest in the world and challenging for the chess crown. And worst of all – proving it. All the top grandmasters in the Soviet Union, led by World Champion Boris Spassky, were invited to a meeting of the federation dedicated to Taimanov's match with Fischer. In reply to the rebukes of Baturinsky, who was responsible for chess on the Sport Committee, Spassky asked, 'Viktor Davidovich, what happens if we all lose to Fischer?!'

Someone had to bear responsibility for the crushing and humiliating defeat in Vancouver. This was the loser. Besides a novel by the disgraced Solzhenitsyn, 1,100 guilders was 'found' in the grandmaster's suitcase. The money together with a letter from FIDE President Max Euwe were intended for Salo Flohr for an article he had written for a Dutch chess magazine. Both facts were seen by the government as virtually a state crime. Everyone back then knew the joke: 'Did you hear? Solzhenitsyn is in big trouble – they found Taimanov's book *The Nimzowitsch Defence* on him.'

Taimanov's state salary was reduced, he was banned from going abroad to international tournaments, and they took away the title 'Honoured Master of Sport'. The country's Minister of Sport

almost started talking about taking Taimanov's International Grandmaster title away from him, but caught himself in time – 'we can't, we're not the ones who gave it to him'...

The title of Taimanov's book, which saw the light after perestroika in 1993, was *I Have Been Fischer's Victim*. In fact, he became a victim of the regime that existed in his homeland back then. A regime that saw each of its representatives as a warrior on an invisible front, defending the prestige of the Soviet state. And for a failure, not to mention a more disastrous collapse, they punished mercilessly. So Taimanov's timid statements on his return to Moscow that sports delegations weren't obliged to go through customs inspections were ignored: there had been an instruction from above.

A few months later, in the Candidates Semi-Finals, Fischer delivered a defeat to Larsen with the same 'dry score', which rehabilitated the Soviet grandmaster to some degree. I remember how in Moscow the witty Petrosian, commenting on a report that had arrived about the American's final victory, pronounced, wagging his head, 'Mm-yes... They can't give Taimanov his Honoured Master of Sport title back, of course, so they might give him the title of Honoured Artiste of the Republic as compensation.'

Three pillars of an awesome generation of Soviet chess greats: Mikhail Tal, Mark Taimanov and Efim Geller.

A thousand concerts

They didn't give Taimanov the title of Honoured Artiste of the Republic, but his concert career stopped of its own accord. During the preparation for the match with Fischer he met his future wife and divorced Lyubov Bruk, to whom he had been married for a quarter of a century.

Lyubov Bruk and Mark Taimanov were a famous piano duo, travelling to concerts throughout the Soviet Union and touring abroad on several occasions. Together with his wife Taimanov played about a thousand concerts, recording numerous LP's and CD's. At the end of the last century Philips put out a series of discs 'Great Pianists of the 20th Century' with recordings by Rubinstein, Rachmaninoff, Horowitz, Richter, Gilels and Gould. One of the double CD's of the series is dedicated to the recordings of Lyubov Bruk and Mark Taimanov.

Taimanov was extremely proud of this and not long before his death he told me, 'You know, when I think about my life, one event is very special. I'm really proud of this inclusion of me (together with Lyubov) in the 100 best pianists in the world. That was the most important thing.'

Although you could see the names Bruk-Taimanov on posters for many more years, Mark no longer had anything to do with this duo. He was replaced by his son Igor, who turns 70 this year as head of a department in the St. Petersburg Conservatoire.

So after his match with Fischer not only a family but also a creative union fell apart, and for Mark Taimanov only chess was left.

Film star

He came to chess in 1937. He was 11 years old, but Mark was already a star of the screen. Portraits of the curly-haired boy adorned all the cinema posters, as Taimanov played one of the main roles in the film *The Beethoven Concerto*. Back then the whole country was singing the song 'Oh, it's good to live in the country of the Soviets!' from that film. *The Beethoven Concerto* enjoyed enormous success not only in the Soviet Union: in six weeks the film sold out on New York's Broadway, and it got a certificate of honour at the World Expo in Paris.

When Taimanov was introduced to Reuben Fine during the USSR-USA match in New York in 1953, he told the American grandmaster, 'We already know each other.' In response to Fine's puzzled look, Taimanov reminded him about the spring of 1937, Leningrad and the white-columned hall of the Pioneers' Palace where the American grandmaster had given a simul. There was a huge crowd of people, and a welcome before the simul from a boy in a pioneer uniform. That was Mark Taimanov. And when the director of the palace offered him his choice of any group, the boy chose chess.

Success came very quickly, and two years later Mark started studying

with Botvinnik himself. The best time for Taimanov was the early to mid-fifties of the last century, when he shared first place with Botvinnik in the Soviet Championship (1952), became champion of the country on his own (1956), and played in the Candidates tournament (1953). The name Taimanov was pronounced in those days in one breath with the names Petrosian and Geller, then Kortchnoi, although later they surpassed him. He became a Candidate again, and was a four-time champion of Europe and Olympiad champion as a member of the national team.

There are quite a few games on his account that can boldly be called instructive, and Taimanov's own words that some of them went into the golden fund of chess art are in no way bravado.

'Taimanov's own words that some of his games went into the golden fund of chess art are in no way bravado.'

But it all started with the pre-war Pioneers' Palace. Playing with young David Bronstein in a pioneers' match between Leningrad and Kiev in 1940, Mark used the Nimzo-Indian, his favourite opening. Despite a quick defeat perpetrated by his quiet, black-haired opponent with the long, penetrating stare, Taimanov remained faithful to the opening that was coming into fashion. He not only regularly used the dynamic opening, introducing a multitude of new ideas to it, but also published a book on it in the early fifties that had huge success and was translated into many languages. In response to 1.e4 he almost always chose the Sicilian, introducing the Taimanov Variation in the Paulsen System to chess, which to this day is included in the repertoire of many grandmasters.

Nevertheless, Botvinnik thought that Taimanov could have achieved more. 'In his search for truth', he said, 'Mark didn't like to doubt, which often led to rushed decisions. This happened with other people too, as with Bogoljubow in the past, and currently with Larsen.'

Working with the young Kasparov, when the boy started making moves too quickly, Botvinnik warned the future World Champion: 'Bear in mind, Garik, that you'll grow up into a second Larsen or Taimanov!' Many players would have dreamed of becoming a second Larsen or Taimanov, but Botvinnik was looking towards the highest peaks, of course.

Taimanov knew that they called him 'the best pianist among chess players and the best chess player among pianists', but he took this sentiment differently from Smyslov, of whom they also said, 'the best chess player among singers and the best singer among chess players'. He explained: 'Vasily Vasilievich thought this joke was harmless, but I was offended. Smyslov sang only on occasion, but I was a true professional in music too.'

At the end of his life he said, 'True, I didn't become World Champion. The battle for the chess crown requires a tough, and sometimes also a harsh attitude towards your opponents. I never tried to crush my opponents.' This was true, of course, but it meant that he experienced obvious piety

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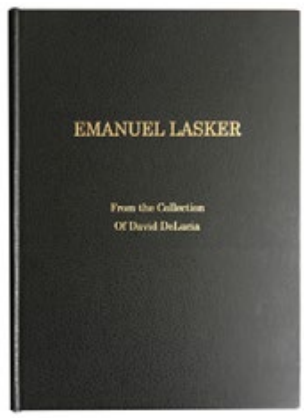

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in relation to the real greats and sometimes agreed a draw in very promising positions. In general he played below his usual level against them, and his match with Fischer was only one example of that.

Son of the Stalin era

In 1952 Taimanov and Bronstein went to Liverpool to defend 'the honour of the state'. Officially the tournament was called the World Student Championship, and both 'students' – one who had already drawn a match for the World Championship, and the other who was five minutes away from becoming a Candidate – battled amateurs who had decided to play chess for fun in their summer holidays. Taimanov recalled that the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party saw them off before their trip, and that Stalin himself signed their permission to travel abroad.

In his memoirs he calls himself a 'son of the Stalin era', and there's no irony in those words. In many interviews Taimanov emphasized that 'despite all the hardships endured by our people, our country, we can't fail to mention that at the same time the line "Thank you Stalin and our native country for our happy childhood, for our happy life" was always observed. Everything possible and even impossible was done for children. Music, art and sport schools were opened, pioneers' houses and palaces. There were competitions between gifted youths, from which my musical successes began. No, I have an ambivalent attitude towards Stalin.'

For him this was really a happy childhood: he was so enthralled by chess, his years of studying in the conservatoire and his first love. And then the privileged position of the famous chess player and pianist, regularly travelling abroad; this bore no relation to the daily life of an ordinary Soviet person.

An absolute highlight in his life: the inclusion of Lyubov Bruk and Mark Taimanov's best recordings in the Great Pianists of the 20th Century series.

Already in his youth Taimanov was a member of the Communist Party, the only party in the Soviet Union, out of career considerations, of course, but primarily to make travelling abroad easier. Far from all of his colleagues joined the party and some of his non-party colleagues even teased him about it. On one occasion in West Germany, during a match against a team from Solingen, the local communists came to see the grandmasters from the Soviet Union. 'Go, Mark Yevgenievich,' Smyslov said at once, 'your comrades have arrived.'

Father again at 78

He was married four times. He married Lyubov Bruk when they were both 19. Taimanov's second wife, Lyulya, died at a comparatively young age. The third time Taimanov was married to the daughter of a colleague and friend from time immemorial – Yuri Averbakh. This marriage didn't withstand the test of time, and sharp-tongued Mark said, 'I remember very well the day when my future wife appeared in the world. Grabbing champagne and flowers, Yuri and I went to the hospital to congratulate her mother and look at the new-born.' And he added, 'If I had known how things would turn out, I would have started her upbringing at that moment.'

His fourth wife, Nadya, was 35 years younger than him. When they had twins, Dima and Masha, their father was 78. 'We decided not to do things by halves', the happy Mark explained.

In the post-perestroika years, when I was in St. Petersburg I always went to see the Taimanovs. And so I did on my last visit. The day was gorgeous, and before calling the large flat on the Petrograd side, I walked around the city for a long time, encountering only the shadows of my own youth. In a kind of minor-philosophical mood I asked when we were by ourselves, 'Mark, tell me, you're older than me, what's the meaning of life?' He wasn't even taken aback by the question, as it was too elementary for him. He just asked back, 'What do you mean what? The meaning of life? It's life! Life itself!'

His wife appeared at the door. 'Dinner's ready! Come in!' 'You see, the meaning of life is in that dinner!' Mark exclaimed, taking me by the hand. 'And in my beloved children.' He hugged Dima and Masha, who were playing close by.

There was a Bechstein in the living room, but the grand piano was closed. 'No, I don't play at all... Well, if the children really want me to...' Dima is 12, he plays the piano and has already had some success, although in complete accordance with the times his father dreamed that the boy would become... the head of a Swiss bank.

In his last years his hearing deteriorated, but he felt embarrassed to ask for things to be repeated, and categorically refused to wear a hearing aid. But his vision remained clear, and he formulated his thoughts very precisely. He never paid any attention to my words of assistance when

he didn't find the continuation of a phrase immediately, but always said something of his own.

Like all other elderly people, he had stories that had become 'records', told so many times, over and over. But he told these stories so vibrantly, getting such visible pleasure from them every time, that you laughed together with the storyteller even if you'd heard them several times before.

When he turned 90, replying to a routine question about longevity, he said, 'I believe in Mendel, the founder of genetics. I have ancestors who lived to 100 in my genealogy. So I can answer this question more precisely in 10 years... But now... I've always wanted to open a chess school in St. Petersburg, and now, at last, it's happened. My life has turned out well!'

Jewish background

Taimanov's mother, Serafima Ivanovna Ilyin, was Russian, and Yevgeny Zakharovich, his father, was Jewish, and from an Orthodox family. But Mark's upbringing, like that of the other children in the family, was completely secular, having nothing to do with religion.

Both spheres of his talent – classical music and chess – were traditionally considered Jewish in Russia, and from childhood he was surrounded by Jewish teachers in the conservatoire and then in chess, and later by his colleagues in both fields. Although he had 'Russian' in the ethnicity column in his passport, Mark's appearance was very Jewish, and it's not easy to say what he felt in the late forties and early fifties during the anti-Semitic campaign in the Soviet Union.

The news about Kortchnoi's defection in 1976 reached Taimanov in Kiev, where he was playing in the team championship for Burevestnik. Lev Alburt recalls how a concerned Taimanov rushed up to a smiling group of young players who were animatedly discussing the event: 'Guys! Why are you laughing?' he exclaimed to them, and a few minutes later sadly added, 'It will be worse for us, for Jews... They'll now forbid us to travel abroad, I don't understand why you're so happy.'

Although his funeral followed the Orthodox tradition in the Cathedral of Prince Vladimir, he only believed whatever was current, thinking that it was always right, easily taking on the flavour of his surroundings.

If the Dalai Lama had come to power in Russia, he would have woken up a Buddhist; he never had a problem under any government, and unlike others, he didn't require any particular transformation. He always followed a sole imperative: Live happily! 'My motto is to be happy today. I don't guess what's going to happen, that would really darken my outlook.' There's no need to guess what Taimanov would have seen if he had looked out of a prison cell at the free world like the two prisoners, one of whom saw only the dirt on the bars, and the other the stars in the sky. This is a gift, of course, that you get from birth, I don't even know what else to call it... A life disposition, perhaps, a mentality... No, a gift, after all.

'My motto is to be happy today. I don't guess what's going to happen, that would really darken my outlook.'

His sister Irina, a professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, once said, 'Mark, you're like a lizard – you get rid of your old tail, and a new one grows.' 'If you only knew how painful the spot is that the old tail came from', her older brother replied.

But for everyone he was different: feet firmly on the ground, not losing his optimism under any circumstances. The word 'optimist' itself became a cliché among journalists writing about him, and if he heard, 'Mark, you're a happy guy!', he never denied the obvious.

'Pianists considered me a chess player, and chess players a pianist', Taimanov repeated more than once with a smile. 'So I'm free of envy from my colleagues, which makes my life easier.' As an epigram for his book of memoirs he chose the words of Tarrasch, said as if especially about him: 'Chess, like love, like music, has the power to make men happy.' He knew these three components of happiness like no one else. And although chess, like music, demands long, intense study under consistent conditions, giving no breaks for the age of the competition, he always joked when he was asked how he managed to combine everything: 'When I was doing chess I was on holiday from music. When I was doing music I was on holiday from chess. So my whole life has been one long holiday.'

The biggest sin

He spent the whole day on October 10 doing things, driving (after already breaking into his tenth decade!), came home in the evening, lay down on the sofa, and complained about a pain in his stomach and his back. An ambulance was called, and he was taken to a hospital, from which he never came out. One organ after another started to fail, but even in intensive care he joked at first, saying, 'When I come home...' He died without regaining consciousness on November 28, 2016.

Jorge Luis Borges said more than once, 'In life I've committed the biggest sin a man can commit: I haven't been happy.' Mark Yevgenievich Taimanov could never reproach himself for that sin. ■

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Do *you* believe in fortresses?

There was plenty of talk about fortresses during the recent World Championship match in New York, as Sergey Karjakin repeatedly saved dubious endgame positions. Magnus Carlsen even made headlines with his comment that 'he doesn't believe in fortresses'. Karjakin's defensive skills appeared particularly heroic because they were demonstrated against arguably the best player ever to wield slight edges. But against most players, the skill to construct defensive fortresses isn't so mystifying or seemingly out of reach.

We have all seen numerous examples of fortresses. Often people imagine fortresses to be airtight mythical defensive setups constructed by genius defenders. When you look at classical games that show brilliant fortresses, this often seems to be the case.

But here I want to focus on more practical situations when we are looking for fortresses in our own games. Endgame fortresses often resemble a desperate and flimsy final stand. Usually, they are far from unbreakable and require the assistance of your opponent to pull them off. Even though occasionally you see common patterns repeated in the defensive structure, this isn't really the important thing you need to learn. The most important skill to construct successful fortresses is your psychological attitude while defending.

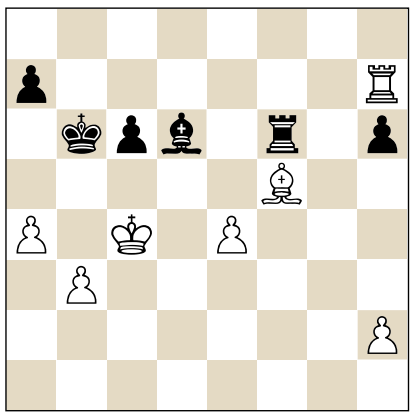
A fortress is just a special case of endgame defence when we don't really have any other viable active defending options. Most people struggle with it because defending is just not fun. Technically, making a draw from a slightly worse position should be as gratifying as winning from a slightly better position. But psychologically, making such a draw just doesn't feel that way.

In seemingly hopeless positions your last hope may be erecting an impenetrable defensive structure. **PARIMARJAN NEGI** argues that the success of such 'fortresses' often depends on your attitude.

Also, such defences are usually long and tedious, since you have to wait while your opponent is trying every possible winning attempt. While you are defending, it is practically impossible to be certain whether you will save the game, and the chance of a loss often looms large in the background, adding further stress to an already tough situation.

So it's no wonder that most players informally describe saving a long game as 'suffering'. In such cases, it is particularly tempting to try and get done with the tension with an 'all or nothing' defensive attempt. That is, go for some immediate forcing lines. If they work, you may be able to save the game in a much easier manner. In such circumstances, it is very easy to convince yourself that it may work, because the thought of suffering for a long time seems so miserable.

I used to be particularly bad at defending endgames. For a while I thought it was just because I wasn't experienced enough. But in reality, it was just a combination of the points I mentioned above. I just couldn't motivate myself to be excited about the prospect of defending for a long time to make a draw. Yet, paradoxically, trying to win for a long time in a drawish position never bothered me. Here is a game that illustrates these pitfalls.



Maletin-Negi
New Delhi 2010
position after 35.♔c4

Black is a pawn down, but the opposite-coloured bishops naturally provide decent chances to construct defensive fortresses. At the same time, it is quite clear that it might be a long and arduous defence... This tempted me to try and calculate my way out of it:

35...♗xh2?

I did see, of course, that White was threatening ♗c8, but I thought I had calculated a good defence.

36.♗c8 ♖f8 37.a5+!

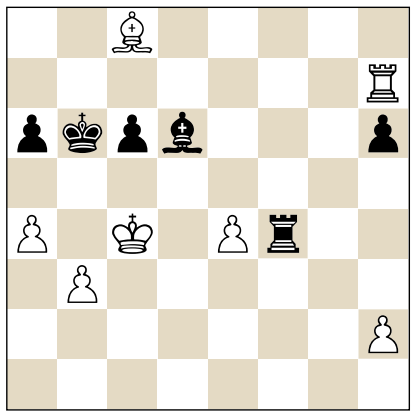
A slightly unexpected tactic. But if I had really paid attention before playing 35...♗xh2, I should probably have been able to find it. Instead, I just really wanted this line to work out for Black, so I assumed that he must have missed my ♖f8, and convinced myself that this

defence would work without being sufficiently careful.
I had only been expecting 37.♖xh6, when I should have a good chance to defend successfully after withdrawing my bishop.
37...♔xa5 38.b4+! ♔b6 39.♖b7+ ♔a6 40.♖b8+ And now it's all over. White won smoothly in a few moves.

I have described why defending such endgames can feel like suffering. Now I am going to tell you to just 'enjoy' such endgames. Indeed, enjoying the task of a long and arduous fight for a draw is all you need to learn. Most great defenders somehow manage to do this. But this change in attitude is, like a lot of good advice, very hard to implement. Many strong players fail to do it, despite the fact that they realize that this is what they need.

Fortunately, there are practical ways to make the defensive task more appealing. It helps by starting with breaking the task down. The crucial step is to focus on preventing what your opponent wants to achieve, making it a little harder for him to win the game. It is important to realize that you don't have to be certain that your defence will work. Often, we find ourselves in endgames which are so bad that it may be impossible to find a perfect defence. If you get dejected about this, you will only lose the motivation to calculate accurately, and this will make your opponent's life so much easier.

Focusing on what your opponent is trying to achieve also gives you a concrete course of action – trying to calculate what he is threatening to do – and, based on that insight, you can try to find a way to keep the fight going. Even more importantly, the task of thwarting your opponent's plans sounds more exciting as well. Let's look once again at the position from the last game with this new attitude.
35...a6! Avoiding the immediate issues with ♗c8 was of course the way to play. White has many options here – and it certainly doesn't look like fun for Black if White just plays some useful moves, like h4, etc. and shuffles his pieces around. But Black isn't losing either. And as long as he doesn't worry too much about the future, he can just keep moving back and forth with the bishop.
36.♗c8 36.b4 needs to be considered, but clearly 36...a5! avoids the immediate mating issues.
36...♖f4!

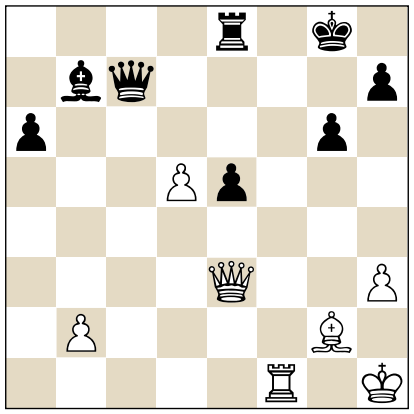


White is obviously doing quite well, but now he has to choose between a lot of pleasant lines which are all better, but not quite winning. This is never easy in practice, and it is very easy to go wrong here... This is probably the most accurate move for Black, although it wasn't necessary to see this.
36...♖f8 37.♖xh6 would be two pawns down for Black, and it might be hard to construct a fortress here. But even this is, of course, better than the game, as a fortress isn't completely unthinkable after 37...♗f4 38.♖h4 a5 39.♗f5 ♗e5 (...♖d8-d4+ is a serious threat now) 40.♔d3. Now 40...♖h8 is probably not enough to draw, but Black can still cause White problems by jumping around with the rook on the 1st rank. At least Black is still in the game!

'Often, we find ourselves in endgames which are so bad that it may be impossible to find a perfect defence.'

Coming to this realization was a revelation for my defensive skills. Once you get the right attitude, it's not so important that you know all the defensive techniques. You will do just your best to defend, which is often enough. Chances are that your opponent will be sloppy with his endgame advantage as well. So remember that you may get more than one chance as well – as long as you keep looking for them.

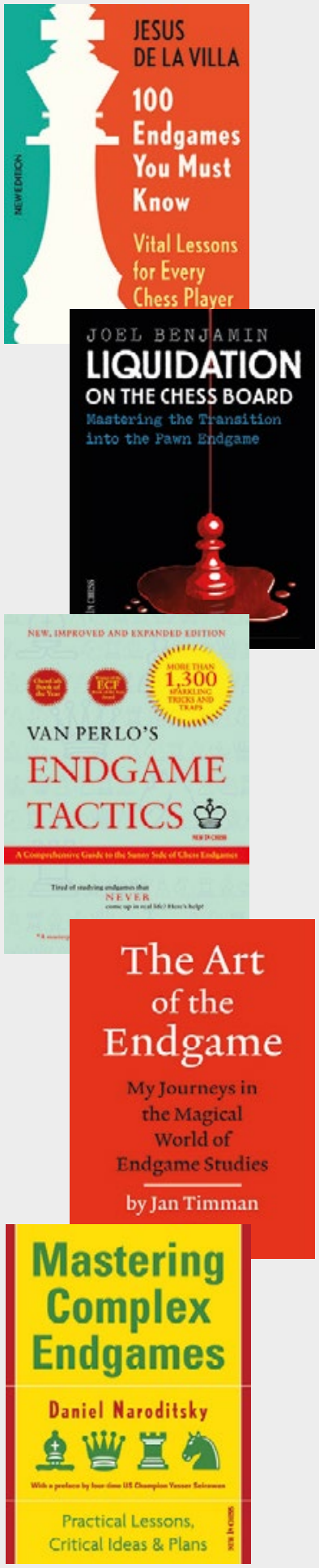
Another important psychological block to overcome when going into a bad endgame – where you may or may not have a fortress – can be the overwhelming feeling of having to defend for a long time. This may make you lose your sense of objectivity and decide to go for an 'all or nothing' defence. I learnt this lesson after many hard losses like the one above. But it has helped me save many tough games since then.



Negi-Almagro
Linares 2013
position after 31...♕c7

Black is a pawn up and the d5-pawn is somewhat vulnerable, too, especially with ideas like ...e4 hanging in the air. White's kingside would also start looking a bit vulnerable after that push, so I decided it was time for a slightly desperate defensive attempt:
32.♖f6!? ♕d8
32...♖d8 33.♕b6 ♕d7 would have been a very interesting way to avoid the queen exchange and might have caused me a much bigger headache. But this involves a lot of precise calculation. For one thing, he needs to figure out why 34.♕e6+ doesn't work: 34...♕xe6 35.♖xe6 ♖xd5!, and now Black has a

Any plans to work on your endgame?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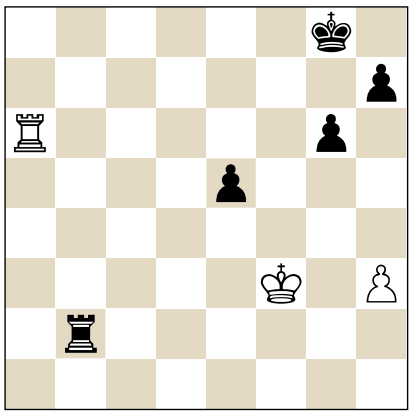
completely winning endgame. But for Black it felt a lot easier to go into an endgame with two extra pawns than to try and calculate all these lines, of course...

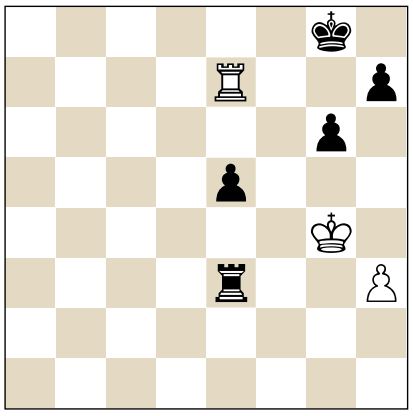
33.♕b6! ♗xd5 34.♕xd8 ♖xd8 35.♖xa6 ♗xg2+ 36.♔xg2 ♖d2+ 37.♔f3 ♖xb2



38.♖e6? 38.♖a7 ♖b3+ 39.♔g4 ♖b4+ 40.♔f3 ♖f4+ 41.♔g3 ♖f7 looks pretty winning for Black.

I was convinced that I had to try and keep the black king on the 8th rank. But instead, a much stronger defensive alternative was to force it to go to h6: 38.♖a8+! ♔g7 39.♖a7+ ♔h6 40.♖e7 ♖b3+ 41.♔g4 ♖e3 42.h4, and here it isn't clear to me at all whether Black is winning. At least it is not easy.

38...♖b3+ 39.♔g4 ♖e3 40.♖e7

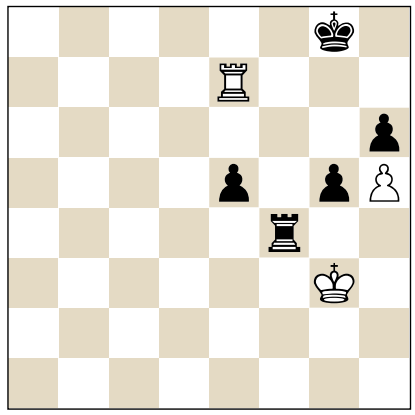


40...♖e1? He returns the favour right before the time control! This just goes to show that you often get more than one chance, as long as you are looking for it.

He should have played 40...h6 41.h4 ♖e4+ 42.♔g3 h5, when ...♔f8 next will kick the rook out, and Black wins.

41.h4 h6 42.h5! Since Black's rook is tied to the e-pawn, he has no good way to keep my king in check. Suddenly, the position is just drawn!

42...♖e4+ 43.♔f3 ♖f4+ 44.♔g3 g5



45.♖e6

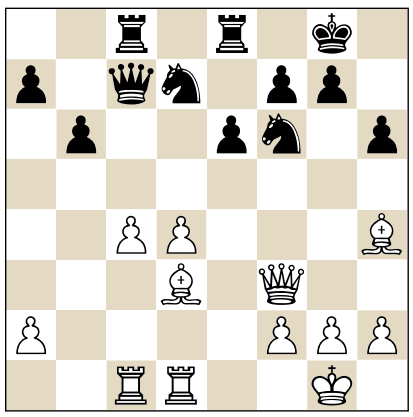
A much prettier draw was 45.♖xe5 ♖h4 46.♔g2! ♖xh5 47.♖e4!, but what I did was quite safe as well, although it required more accuracy:

45...♔g7 46.♖e7+ ♔f6 47.♖h7 g4 48.♖xh6+ ♔g5 49.♖e6 ♖f3+ 50.♔g2 ♔f5 51.♖e8 ♖h3 52.♖h8 ♔g5 53.♖e8 ♔f6 54.♖f8+ ♔g5 55.♖e8 ♔f4 56.♖h8 ♔g5 Draw.

Notice that the idea of 32.♖f6, followed by 33.♕b6, was probably not the best. But Black also had quite a few interesting responses. Practically, it would probably have been more annoying for me if he had kept the queens on the board. But the endgame seemed so nice for him – clearly he was close to winning while I had to hold on for dear life – so he naturally felt inclined to go for that. This is a typical pattern you can find in games with successful fortresses. It is easy for the attacker to overestimate his chances in such endgames, and if you don't mind defending a worse position for a long time, this can be a great way to lure him away from continuations that might have been practically harder to defend against.

Besides the psychological issues, there are of course certain patterns that can be useful when constructing fortresses. One very useful technique is to visualize where you want to place your pieces in the future. Often, it might seem like you have too many moves –, so hav-

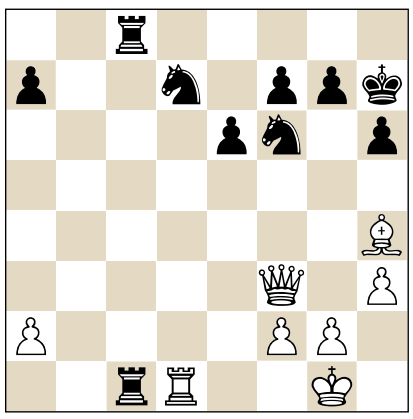
ing an idea about where you want your pieces to be can prove to be a vital guiding light. The de facto 'king' of fortresses is definitely Viswanathan Anand. Let us look at one of his games that highlights this, and other useful techniques.



Gelfand-Anand
Moscow World Championship 2012 (9)
position after 18.♗h4

18...♕d6!? Once again, a very similar idea to the previous game! Anand has an unpleasant position and he provokes Gelfand with the tempting option to simplify into an endgame in which he is a queen up for a rook and a knight. Of course. Anand had to calculate the consequences of the queen sacrifice – and, most importantly, to visualize where he could put his pieces. But once he had done that, he was probably a lot happier with going for the worse endgame than playing this unpleasant middlegame. At the same time, it was very hard for Gelfand to resist going for an endgame in which he was material up and could keep trying for a win for a long time.

19.c5 bxc5 20.dxc5 ♖xc5 21.♗h7+ ♔xh7 22.♖xd6 ♖xc1+ 23.♖d1 ♖ec8 24.h3

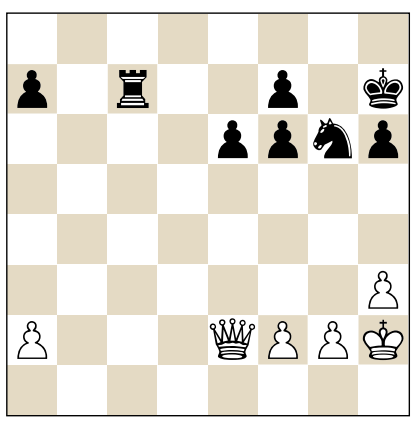


24...♘e5! A very important manoeuvre that Anand had no doubt seen before going for this endgame. After **25.♕e2 ♘g6** White is practically forced to give up the bishop. With the bishop still alive, it would probably have been much harder to defend for Black. The computer isn't very impressed by Anand's plan, but he knew exactly what he was doing.

26.♗xf6

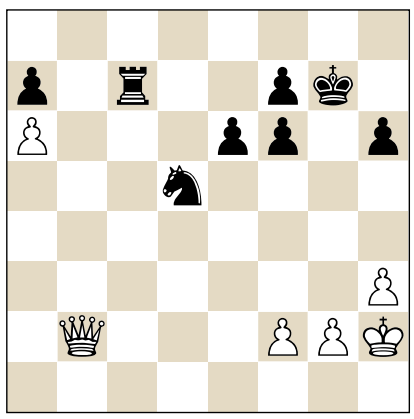
Since 26.♗g3 runs into 26...♖8c2 27.♕f3 ♖xd1+ 28.♕xd1 ♖xa2.

26...gxf6 27.♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 28.♔h2 ♖c7!



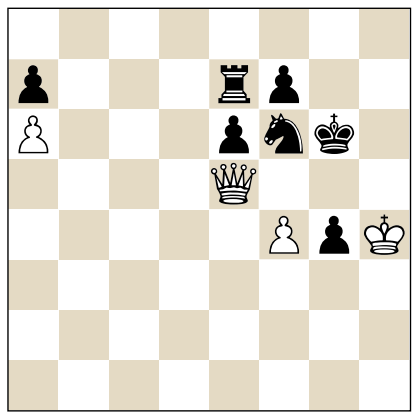
Anand probably didn't calculate the exact lines after ...♘g6, ♗xf6, but he may have visualized where his pieces would end up. Particularly, with a set-up like ... ♖c7 and ...♘d5, it seems as if Black will be able to defend all his pawns and pieces compactly. Then it will be White's turn to try and prove an advantage.

29.♕b2 ♔g7 30.a4 ♘e7 31.a5 ♘d5 32.a6



Now it is time to show patience and wait. White probably had other ways to try and create something, but Black's position looks too solid. The next few moves don't really require any comments: **32...♔h7 33.♕d4 f5 34.f4 ♖d7 35.♔g3 ♔g6 36.♕h8 ♘f6 37.♕b8 h5 38.♔h4 ♔h6 39.♕b2 ♔g6 40.♕c3 ♘e4 41.♕c8 ♘f6 42.♕b8 ♖e7 43.g4 hxg4 44.hxg4 fxg4 45.♕e5**

It is easy to get complacent and stop calculating when you have been shuffling around in a fortress for a long time. But Anand was still very alert to the dangers.



45...♘g8! Since White would get attacking chances after 45...♘d5 46.♕g5+ ♔h7 47.f5! f6 48.♕d2. **46.♕g5+ ♔h7 47.♕xg4 f6 48.♕g2 ♔h8 49.♕e4 ♔g7** Draw.

Conclusion:

■ Defending bad endgames is hard – but mostly because the thought of being close to a loss for a long time just seems too overwhelming. You easily get tempted to try 'all or nothing' solutions to solve the problem immediately.

■ The key to successful defending is to change your mind-set – and instead focus on thwarting your opponent's ideas for as long as you can.

■ Being confident in your ability to defend a long endgame can open new possibilities, since your opponent might easily overestimate his chances if he appears to be playing for a win with little risk.

■ One of the key abilities to assess the chances of a defensive set-up is to be able to visualize where your pieces will go. In general, this can also help guide your moves when there seem to be too many similar options. ■

LENNART OOTES

At the traditional closing dinner in Simpson's-in-the-Strand, Vishy Anand and Wesley So seem to be mainly focused on the main course of black and white pawns on a bed of chequered squares.

As he entered the London Chess Classic topping the overall Grand Chess Tour standings, Wesley So faced the dilemma of how to defend his lead. Two early victories produced a simple answer: by winning the final leg as well! Playing with confidence, the 23-year-old grandmaster from Minnesota rounded off a majestic year with a well-deserved $295,000 payday. **ERWIN L'AMI** was in London as Anish Giri's second and shares his impressions.

Wesley So finishes in style

American clinches Grand Chess Tour with victory in London Classic

The first time I met Wesley So was in 2010, in Wijk aan Zee. Wesley had just turned 16 and was already one of the favourites to win the Challengers and thus earn an invitation to the top group, the Masters, the next year. On the rest day we both joined an excursion to nearby Haarlem, and while wandering around the historic city centre we got talking about a wide range of topics. What struck me most was the fact that he told me he was living by himself in Manila and that he had been given the goal by his family to reach 2700 by the end of the year, 'or else go to university'.

Yes, dear reader, 2700 before you turn 17. Please reset your goals for the coming year! Wesley didn't manage to reach that immediate goal and shortly afterwards he moved to the States to study at Webster University in St. Louis as part of Susan Polgar and her husband Paul Truong's chess programme there. He left the programme in a dramatic break-up at the end of 2014. In a shocking interview in New In Chess (issue 2015/4) Wesley spoke about Truong's reign of terror, the painful confrontation with his estranged mother during the 2014 US Championship, and the decision to become a professional chess player after he had found a new family that gave him the home and affection he was longing for.

From that moment on, his stepmother Lotis Key became his companion to tournaments, and I was curious to see how he would develop as a player.

If we limit ourselves to the year 2016, we can only say that we saw a brand-new Wesley So emerge. According to my database, Wesley only lost two classical games in those 12 months, won the Olympiad in Baku with Team USA and arrived in London as the leader of the Grand Chess Tour standings. Most importantly, he seems to be completely at peace with himself and his surroundings, and has now taken a leap over the sacred 2800-mark.

So, on to London! Over the years, Malcolm Pein has managed to establish an incredible festival in London, where the world elite comes together to end the chess season. But not only the world's elite. Chess in Schools and Communities, the charity that Pein has set up, has successfully spread chess to kids all over Great Britain. This year's festival saw literally hundreds of children playing chess at the Olympiad conference centre, and as per tradition, some of them were allowed to make the first move for the grandmasters. It was particularly touching to see Noga Uriely and her mother come on stage. Noga, too small to reach the board, was helped by an alert Fabiano Caruana, who gently pushed the board in the direction of the young girl. Now, with just one foot still touching the floor and half crawling

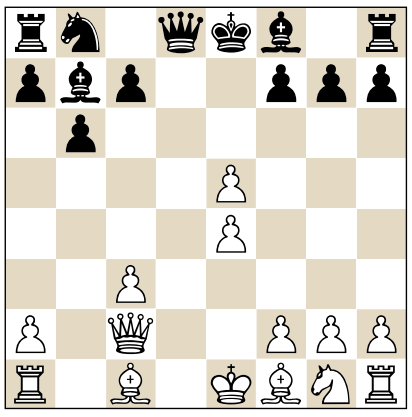
on the table, she managed to reach the d-pawn and firmly placed it on the d4-square! Noga is the little sister of Michael Uriely, who tragically passed away due to an asthma attack last year – at just nine years of age. Michael was a talented chess player, and this year's Super Rapid Play (a very strong two day rapid-event) was played in his memory. In that event, over 40 grandmasters competed for the first prize of 5,000 pounds, and in the end it was Valentina Gunina who cleared the field with a formidable 9/10 score!

The following game is not flawless, but nevertheless a great example of Gunina's dynamic style of play.

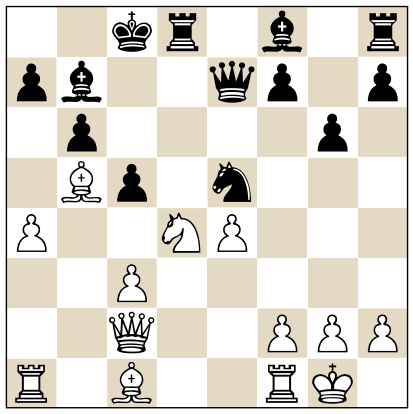
NOTES BY
Erwin l'Ami

Valentina Gunina
Eduardo Iturrizaga
London Superrapid 2016 (7)
Queen's Indian Accelerated

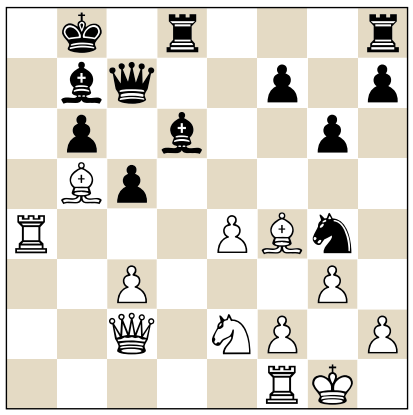
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 b6
A typical modern way of playing. Having said that, it was Alekhine who experimented with this set-up nearly 100 years ago.
3.♘c3 ♗b7 4.♕c2 d5
Alekhine's preferred choice as well. He also tried 4...♘c6?!, but after 5.♘f3, followed by e4, White has a significant advantage already.
5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 e5!? Just as in the Grünfeld, Black tries to chip away at White's centre.
8.dxe5



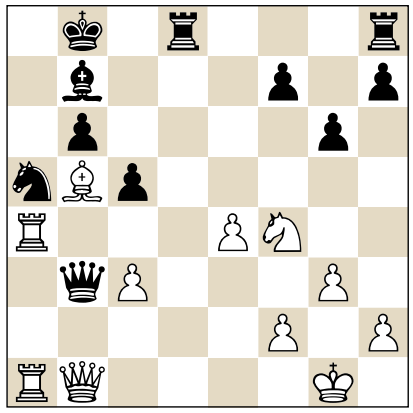
8...♘d7 Here 8...♕h4!? 9.♗b5+ ♘d7 10.♘f3 ♕xe4+ 11.♕xe4 ♗xe4 12.♘g5 ♗xg2 13.♖g1 c6 14.♖xg2 cxb5 15.e6 fxe6 16.♘xe6 ♔f7 was more than fine for Black in Euwe-Alekhine, Budapest 1921. I assume that keeping the pawn with 9.♗d3 ♘bd7 10.♘f3 is a more critical test.
9.♘f3 ♕e7 10.♗b5 0-0-0 11.0-0 ♘xe5 12.♘d4
Black cannot be too unhappy about the outcome of the opening, but over the next few moves he quickly loses the thread. Here I like 12...a6 13.♗e2 h5!? to create some discomfort on the kingside: 14.f4 ♘g4 15.h3 ♕h4! is a nice sample of the dangers White should be aware of here.
12...g6 13.a4 c5



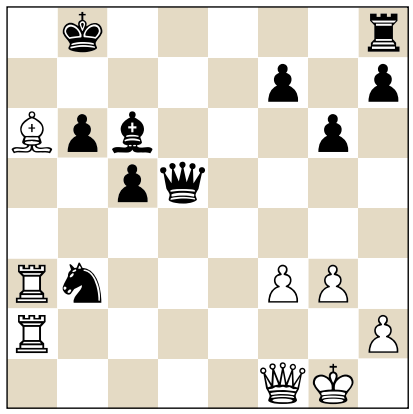
14.a5!
Emphasizing the fact that Black's last move didn't constitute any threat.
14...♕c7 Or 14...a6 15.♗e2 b5 16.♘xb5! axb5 17.♗xb5, and the piece deficit is barely felt.
15.axb6 axb6 16.♘e2 ♘g4 17.♗f4 ♗d6 18.g3 ♔b8 19.♖a4



19...♘e5?!
Exchanging a pair of bishops first with 19...♗xf4 20.♘xf4 before going 20...♘e5 would have relieved some of the pressure.
20.♖fa1 ♘c6 21.♗xd6 21.♗a6! was decisive here, as 21...♘a5 22.♖xa5! bxa5 23.♖b1 pins and wins. And if Black doesn't go 21...♘a5, White will simply triple on the a-file with ♕a2.
21...♕xd6 22.♕a2 Again there was 22.♗a6!. **22...♕e6 23.♕b1 ♘a5 24.♘f4 ♕b3**

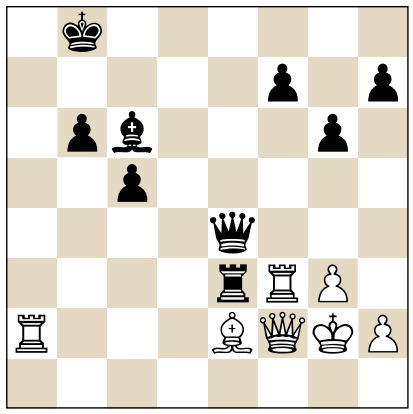


25.♕f1 Now the game is once more open to all three results. It was 25.♗a6! (again!) that would still guarantee an advantage because of the pin on the b-file: 25...♗xa6 26.♖xa5 ♕xb1+ 27.♖xb1 ♖d1+ 28.♖xd1 bxa5 29.♖a1, winning a pawn.
25...♕xc3 26.♗a6 ♗c6 27.♘d5 ♖xd5! 28.♖4a3 ♕d2 29.exd5 ♕xd5 30.f3 ♘b3 31.♖1a2



31...♘d2?! 31...♘d4! would have completed the comeback. Black is completely dominating here, since White's threats on the a-file are non-existent with the bishop on c6. Back's initiative, however, is very real!
32.♕e2 ♕d4+ 33.♔g2 ♘xf3 34.♖xf3 ♖e8 35.♕f2 ♖e3 36.♗e2 g5

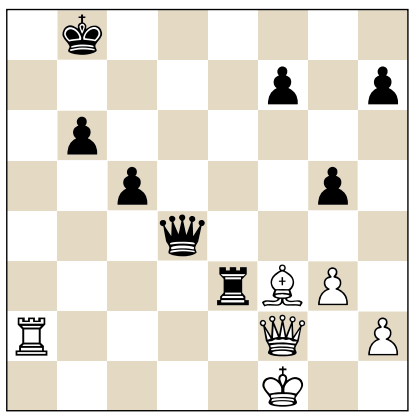
Here the amazing 36...♕e4!?



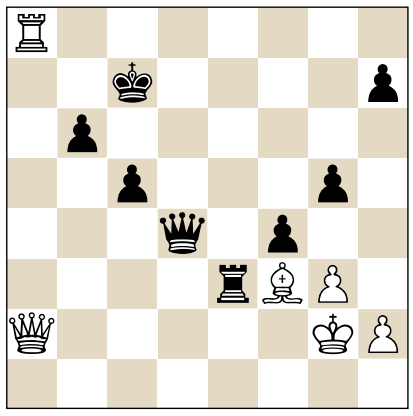
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

would have led to an extraordinary position in which it seems White is unable to successfully disentangle. Give it a go!

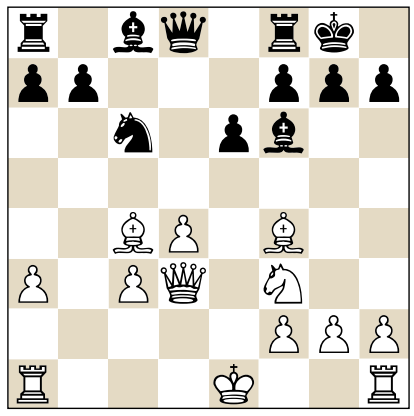
37.♔f1 ♗xf3 38.♗xf3



38...f5 After 38...♕c4+ 39.♔g2, 39...♖xf3!! 40.♔xf3 g4+ 41.♔e3 ♕e6+ 42.♔f4 ♕f6+ 43.♔xg4 ♕e6+! 44.♔f3 ♕d5+! 45.♔f4 ♕d6+! 46.♔f5 ♕e6+ is a beautiful perpetual that I don't think many people would find in a rapid game! **39.♔g2 f4?** After 39...g4! it would still be a game. **40.♖a8+ ♔c7 41.♕a2!**



41...♖e7 42.♕a7+ ♔d6 43.♖d8+ ♔e6 44.♕xb6+ Black resigned.



Short-Howell
London 2016, British KO-championship
position after 12...♗f6

LENNART OOTES

Don't be deceived by this radiant smile. Relying on her trademark aggressive style, Valentina Gunina clinched the Super Rapid Play ahead of more than 40 GMs, scoring 9 from 10!

Other side-events included a strong open tournament, in which 1st place was shared by French GMs Etienne Bacrot and Sebastien Mazé. The former had actually really come for the rapid-event, but ended up claiming a big prize before that event even started! Definitely worth mentioning as well was the British Knock-Out Championship, which was won by NIC's one and only Nigel Short. Short looks back on this victory elsewhere in this issue, but I'll just show you one position from his final match versus David Howell.

Undoubtedly, Nigel will also touch upon this position, so I will just paint the picture of a conversation that took place in the VIP room the following day.

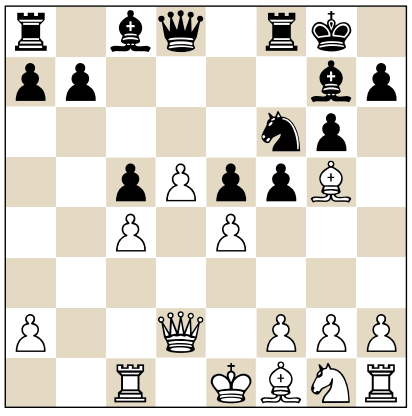
White played the very imaginative **13.♔f1!?!** here, which is certainly not the first move one would think of but which had immediate success after Black's somewhat panicky reply **13...e5?!**

'That's how you play chess!' Short told Anish Giri with a big smile. 'If I had your rating, I probably would!' was Giri's witty reply, after which the whole room burst out laughing.

It was a nice sample of the atmosphere in the VIP-room, where Julian Hodgson held court in highly entertaining fashion, making sure that everyone was up to date with the happenings of the tournament.

In the final leg of the Grand Chess Tour, Wesley So needed to take at least 3rd place to be sure of overall GCT-victory. Great results in the rapid and blitz event in Leuven and his victory in the Sinquefield Cup had

given him a huge lead in the standings. Already in the very first round Wesley took a big step by unwrapping an early Christmas present from his closest rival Hikaru Nakamura.



Nakamura-So
London 2016 (1)
position after 12...♘f6

Black is already doing very well here, but Nakamura, still thinking he was following his preparation, now played **13.♘e2?**, when a surprised So had no problem finishing the game with **13...♘xe4 14.♗xd8 ♘xd2 15.♗e7 ♖f7 16.♗xc5 ♘xf1**, followed by ...b6, ...♗a6 and ...♖c8, when White's central pawns will fall.

This was obviously a dream start, and when it was followed by a win in the second game, nobody had any doubts about who would be the winner of the GCT 2016.

NOTES BY
Wesley So

Wesley So
Michael Adams
London 2016 (2)
Catalan, Open Variation

To win the 2016 Grand Chess Tour was the cherry on top of the 'dream come true' year I've had. I don't think it is naive to admit I am stunned by the best year in my chess career so far. I was awarded the Samford Scholarship this year. Great men believing in you does a lot for your confidence. Two Gold Medals at the 2016 Olympiad, first in the Sinquefield Cup, then in the London Classic. Not too bad a performance in the Paris and Leuven Grand Chess Tour Rapid and Blitz legs (time-controls I am not that experienced in).

I am not just stunned. I am a little terrified. I would like to thank the Lord and my family. Just speaking for myself, it would be impossible to do my best without this support system. Just participating in the Grand Chess Tour was a miracle in my life (I only qualified because Magnus could not play due to the Championship Match). I really believe the opportunity to work with the best in the world lifted my own game to new levels. So a big thank you to all my opponents, who have taught me so much!

One of those opponents was the great GM Michael Adams, and I want to present to you my game against him, as I think this was my best effort in the London tournament. The game is far from perfect. We both made mistakes and faltered here and there, but in general I like the ideas and the nature of this game. I had just won my first-round game against Hikaru Nakamura, but I had more black games in London than in the Sinquefield Cup, so my goal coming into Round 2 with White was to get something before I got Black again.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6

Michael Adams almost exclusively plays this as part of an ultra-solid repertoire comprised of the Nimzo/QGD openings. His choices with Black are very similar to those of Vladimir Kramnik, and you can't go wrong with those!

3.g3

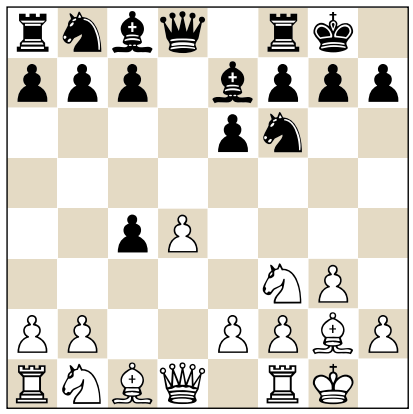
An advantage with the London Classic is that they give you the pairings well in advance, so before arriving in London I had time to think through my strategies. Michael is a deceptively mild and quiet guy, but very tricky if you study him more closely, and once in London I started having doubts about whether my plan was solid... whether I should try something else... In the end I stuck with my planned Catalan and just tried to prepare my variations as deeply as possible.

Recently, Nakamura has been trying to prove an advantage with 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2, and it might be worth a try, but Adams has very good results with Black here.

'I really believe the opportunity to work with the best in the world lifted my own game to new levels.'

3...d5 4.♗g2 ♗e7 Using the 4.♗g2 move order gives White the extra option of 4...♗b4+ 5.♘d2, since 5...dxc4? loses a piece to 6.♕a4+.

5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4



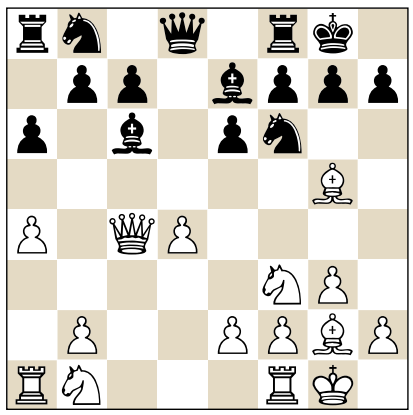
Michael goes for the most solid line against the Catalan. I believe this used to be Karpov's favourite system with Black, and it is amazing that it has withstood the test of time, because even today White is having difficulties proving an advantage anywhere.

7.♕c2 a6 8.a4

8.♕xc4 b5 9.♕c2 ♗b7 10.♗d2 used to be the most topical variation not so

long ago, until Black found 10...♗e4 11.♕c1 c6!, threatening to win the pawn on d4 and seemingly equalizing comfortably.

8...♗d7 9.♕xc4 ♗c6 10.♗g5



I believe this is the old main line, and it recently has experienced a revival with players like GMs Aronian, Giri, Nakamura, Eljanov, Meier all giving it a try.

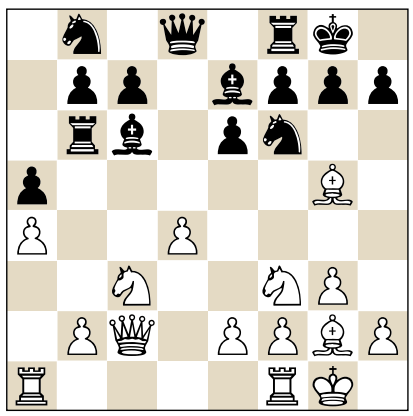
10...a5 Michael has recently played 10...h6 and 10...♗d5, so perhaps for this game he tries a third option!?

11.♘c3 ♖a6 11...♘a6 looks very solid for Black as well.

12.♕d3 Normally White goes 12.e3, but then, after 12...♖b6 13.♕e2 ♘bd7, followed by ...h6, White has to give up his bishop pair.

12.♕d3 gives the extra option of being able to drop the bishop back to d2 or e3.

12...♖b6 13.♕c2

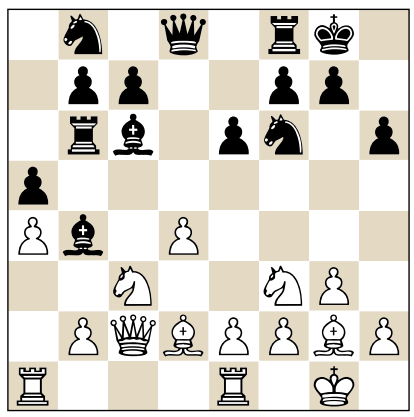


13...h6 13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘c6 15.e3 ♘b4 16.♕e2 h6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 looks totally fine for Black to me.

14.♗d2 I briefly contemplated 14.♗e3 ♘d5 15.♗d2 ♘b4 16.♕b1, when his knight does not seem to be doing much on b4.

14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 obviously does not give White much, and 15.♖fd1 can be met by 15...♗d5, threatening 16...♗b3.

14...♗b4 15.♖fe1 Preparing to occupy the centre with e4.



15...♗xf3

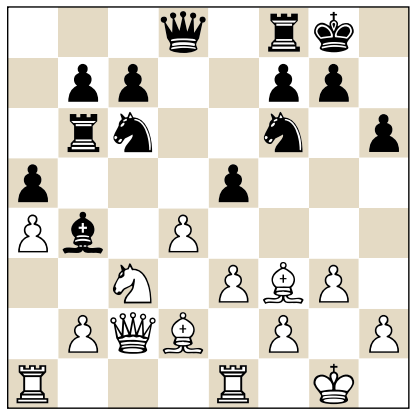
I was expecting 15...♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♗e4, when White seems to have a nice position, but my knight is pinned and he controls the b-file. Still, after 17.♕a2 ♘c6 18.♖ed1 I should be slightly better: 18...♗d5 19.c4 ♗xf3 20.exf3 ♘b4 21.♕b3.

16.♗xf3 ♘c6 17.e3

I felt I was doing well here, since I have the bishop pair and his rook looks a bit silly on b6. But Michael surprised me again by breaking in the centre right away.

17...e5

Michael decides to force matters. Objectively a normal move like 17...♕e7 is better, but perhaps Michael didn't want to give me time to consolidate with 18.♗g2 e5 19.d5 ♘b8 20.♖ed1 ♘a6 21.♘b5, and White has an edge.



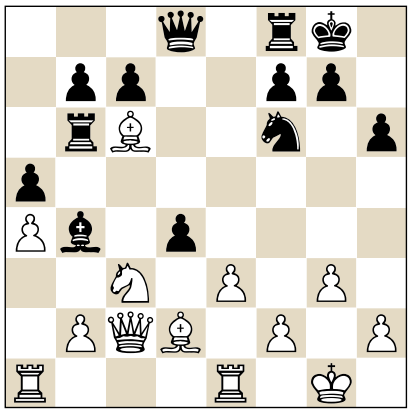
18.♗xc6! 18.d5 is another option, although after 18...♗xc3 19.♗xc3 ♘b4 20.♕d2 e4 the well-placed knight on b4 assures Black a solid position.

LENNART OOTES

Malcolm Pein, Tournament Director of the London Chess Classic, hands the trophy to the delighted winner Wesley So.

18...exd4

18...♖xc6 19.dxe5 ♘d5 won't give Black enough for the pawn, although it will force White to play accurately, since without my Catalan bishop there are always going to be weak squares around my king.



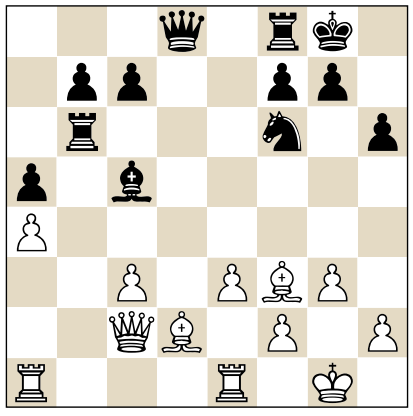
19.♗f3

I went for this, because I thought that at some later point, one of my rooks might be defended on d1 and I can slowly improve my position with ♔g2, etc.

However, during the game I wasn't sure of whether g2 or f3 was a better place for my bishop. Perhaps slightly more accurate is 19.♗g2 dxc3 20.bxc3 ♗c5 21.♖ed1. The point now is that Black's ...♘d7-♕f6 combo does not work, as there is no bishop to attack on f3. 21...♕e7 22.c4 ♖a8 23.♗c3. I like White, because I will have full control of the d-file and put pressure on his b7-pawn as well.

19...dxc3 20.bxc3 ♗c5

Now I had a good long think, because I felt it was a critical moment to try to increase my advantage, but even so I failed to find the best continuation for White.



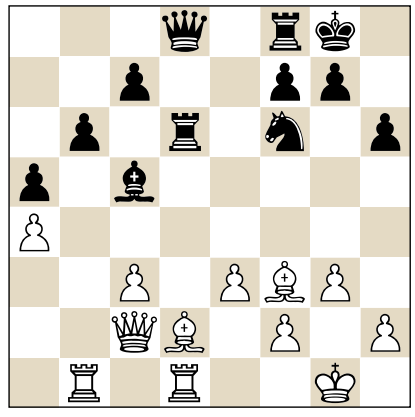
21.♖ab1

Much stronger is 21.♖ed1! ♘d7 (after 21...♕e7 22.c4, I seize control of the d-file, since 22...♗b4? 23.c5 is bad, because I win one of his queenside pawns) 22.c4 ♕f6. I was worried about this counter-attack, since Black's threats looked very powerful. Still, after 23.♗xa5 ♖b2 24.♕e4 ♘e5 25.♔g2, apparently there is nothing to be afraid of! A pawn is a pawn: 25...♘xf3 26.♕xf3, and White has good chances to convert it.

I even thought long and hard about 21.c4 ♗b4 22.c5 ♕xd2 23.♕xd2 ♗xd2 24.cxb6 ♗xe1 25.bxc7, when White seems to have a pleasant endgame, but here comes 25...♗xf2+! (25...♖c8 26.♖xe1 ♖xc7 27.♖b1 ♖c4) 26.♔xf2 ♖c8 27.♖c1 ♘e8 28.♗xb7 ♖xc7 29.♖xc7 ♘xc7 30.♔e2 ♔f8, and Black should hold without much difficulty.

21...♖d6 21...♖xb1 22.♖xb1 b6 is what I had expected, and it leads to very similar play to the game.

22.♖ed1 b6



23.c4

I'm a little hesitant to open up the diagonal for his bishop with 23.e4, although I did consider it. Black is just fine after 23...♘d7 24.♗f4 ♖xd1+ 25.♖xd1 g5!, though.

23...♕e7 24.♗c3 ♖fd8 25.♗b2

I just make a useful move while avoiding all his ...♗xe3 possibilities.

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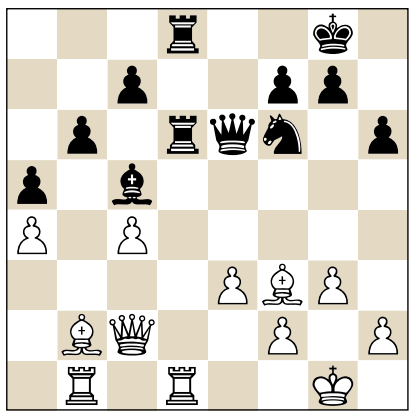
25...♕e6 Keeping an eye on the c4-pawn. 25...♖xd1+ 26.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 27.♕xd1 ♘e4 is the computer suggestion, although it's not entirely clear to me where his knight is going: 28.♕d3 ♘g5. Perhaps his idea is to go ...♘e6-c5 or to try to exchange queens.

25...♘d7 can be met by 26.♖d5, and then perhaps Black has nothing better than to go back with ...♘f6.

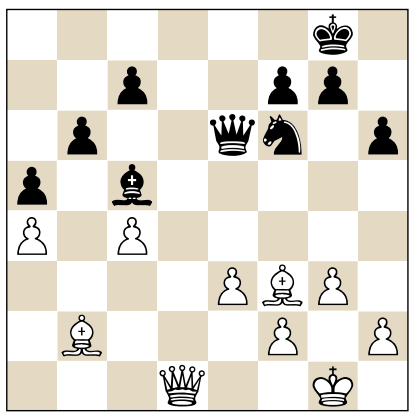


26.♖xd6 26.♔g2 might be slightly more precise, as Black does not have time for ...♘h7-g5 ideas, while I slowly improve my position. White is slightly better after both 26...♖xd1 27.♖xd1 ♖xd1 28.♕xd1 and 26...♘h7 27.♗d5 ♕e7 28.h4.

26...♖xd6 26...cxd6?! is not very good with a pair of rooks still on the board: 27.♖d1 ♖c8 28.♔g2, when White can perhaps take on f6 later, put the bishop on d5, and go ♖d3-f3.

27.♖d1 I didn't see any advantage for me in keeping the rooks on the board, and I also had to fight for control of the only open file.

27...♖xd1+ 28.♕xd1



28...♗d6

28...♕xc4?! looks bad for Black, and the forced sequence after 29.♗xf6 gxf6 30.♗d5 ♕b4 31.♕h5 ♕b1+ 32.♔g2 ♕h7 33.♕g4+ ♕g7 34.♕c8+ ♕f8 35.♕xc7 will not give him any reason to be cheerful (opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacking side). At the same time, I was not sure how White would win here.

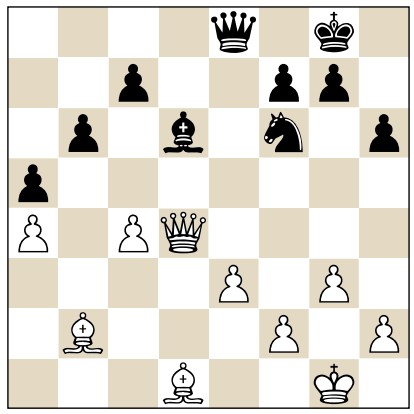
29.♕d4 Centralizing my queen while preventing ...♗e5. It was clear to me by now that I had lost most of my chances and that I should have played better on move 21. However, what's done is done and so I still tried to keep the game going rather than go for a draw with 29.♗xf6.

The computer's idea 29.c5 ♗xc5 30.♕d8+ ♘e8 31.♗d5 ♕e7 32.♕c8 is perhaps too deep to foresee. White has interesting compensation for the pawn, since Black's pieces are a bit paralysed right now: 32...♔h7 33.♗c4 g6 34.h4 h5.

29.♔g2 ♗e5 30.♕d8+ ♔h7 31.♕d3+ ♔g8 32.♗c1 looks okay for Black.

29...♕e8 Here I was anticipating 29...♕d7, when it is hard for White to avoid the queen swap. After 30.♗d1 ♗e5 31.♕xd7 ♘xd7 32.♗c1 the endgame should be just a draw objectively speaking, although Black still has to defend accurately.

30.♗d1



30...♕c6?!

This gives me time to consolidate my position.

Black should go for 30...♕e4 31.♕c3 (31.♕xe4 ♘xe4 gives Black an annoying knight jump to d2, preventing my king from approaching the centre) 31...♕b1 (31...♗b4 32.♕c2) 32.♕c2 ♕xc2 33.♗xc2 ♘d7. Michael asked me afterwards what I thought about this endgame, as he felt there was some slight danger for Black due to my bishop pair and slightly better pawn structure. It's hard to say. I felt that White should have some chances here, too, and the position is easier for me to play. But the question is, can White make real progress or not?

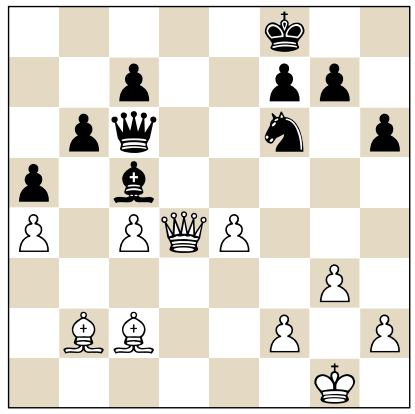
I checked with the computer, and it seems to imply that Black can hold fairly easily: 34.f4 f6. Black's best bet is to put his pawns on f6, g6 and, say, h6 or h5 and put his king on f7 and his knight on c5. This set-up seems to be an impenetrable fortress: 35.♔g2 ♔f7 36.♔f3 h5 37.e4 g6, and in top-level chess people would say 'this is just a draw'.

The alternative (instead of 34...f6) is 34...g6 35.♔f2 h5 36.♔f3 ♔f8 37.e4. If White gets the e5-f4-g3-h2-pawn chain, Black will be in trouble, so 37...f6!. Now White may consider 38.e5 fxe5 39.♗xg6 exf4 40.gxf4 ♘c5 41.♗c2, but I think Black should hold here anyway.

31.♗c2 ♔f8 32.e4

White has to start pushing pawns at some point. I think this is the right moment, as Black's king is trying to post itself in the centre.

32...♗c5



33.♕d8+! It is very important to force his knight into a passive position.

33...♘e8 34.♕d5 Now that his knight is passive, I offer a queen swap. This is also the most natural move, as he was threatening to entrap my queen on d8 with ...♗d6.

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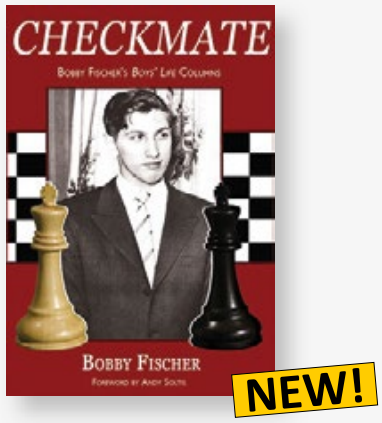

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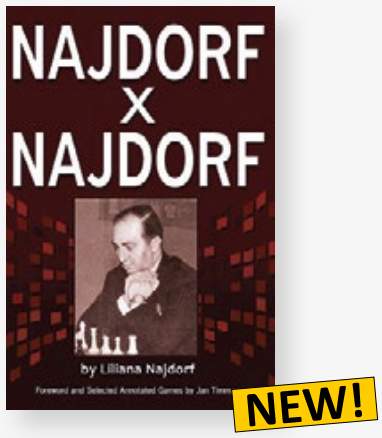

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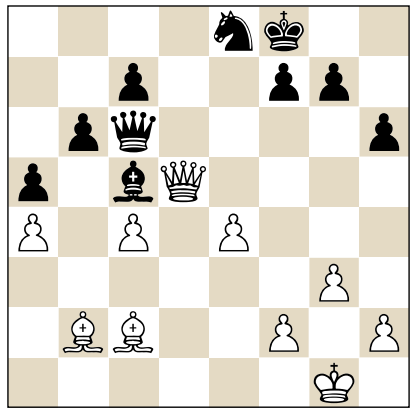
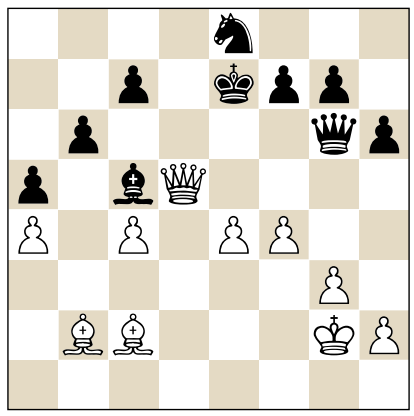
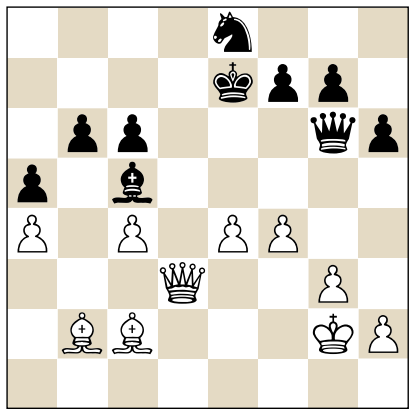


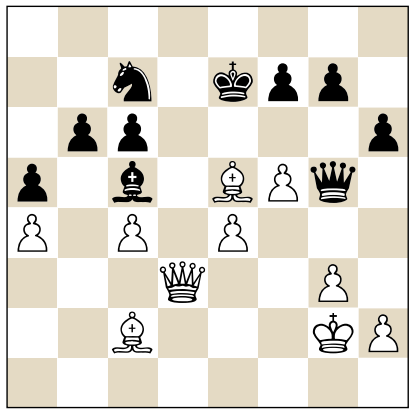
34...♕g6 Apparently, Black's best defence is 34...♕d6!, and now:
– The point is that I should not play 35.e5 ♕xd5 36.cxd5 f6, when I cannot support my centre with f4, since my f-pawn is pinned.
– 35.♔g2 ♘f6 36.♕xd6+ cxd6 looks close to a draw.
But bad is 34...♕xd5 35.cxd5 ♘d6 36.♗d3, when I have powerful connected central pawns that may be supported by f4 and ♔g2-f3. In addition, the sacrifice 36...b5 almost never works here, since my bishops control everything: 37.axb5 a4 38.♔f1 a3 39.♗c3.
35.♔g2 Preparing f4. **35...♔e7**
36.f4 I just played the most natural move, but this is a serious inaccuracy, since Black can exploit my weakened king's position now. I should have played 36.h4!, threatening h5, while at the same time keeping my king safe enough to prevent any possible ...♘f6 counterplay: 36...c6 37.♕e5+ ♔f8 38.♕c3 ♕g4 39.♕d3.



36...c6?!
Here Michael missed a good chance to solve his problems: 36...♘f6! 37.♕e5+ (37.♗xf6+ ♕xf6 38.e5 ♕e6, with equality; 37.♕c6 ♕g4! draws at once, since White's king is too vulnerable: 38.♗xf6+ gxf6 39.♕xc7+ ♔e8) 37...♔d7 38.h3 ♗d6, and Black is completely okay.
37.♕d3



37...♘c7?
A huge blunder, but Michael was very low on time, having only a few minutes to make the time-control. Remember, unlike in other tournaments, in the London Classic we only got the increments after move 40. He should have played 37...f6 38.♕e2, when White remains better, but Black is still in the game.
38.f5 After this it's over, since Black loses material. **38...♕g5** Black also loses after 38...♕h7 39.f6+ gxf6 40.♗xf6+ or 38...♕d6 39.♕xd6+ ♗xd6 40.♗xg7. **39.♗e5!**



39...♘e6 If 39...♕c1 then 40.♗xc7 ♕g1+ 41.♔h3, and I will threaten mate with 42.♕d8.
And 39...♘a6 40.♗f4 ♕g4 41.♗d1 ♘b4 42.♕d2 loses the queen.
40.fxe6
Here Michael lost on time, but Black loses a piece anyway, since 40...♕xe5 is mate after 41.♕d7.

■ ■ ■

We shouldn't forget that besides So, there were nine other world-class players in London. Both Mickey Adams and Veselin Topalov had a particularly rough start, but while Adams managed to stop the bleeding and turn a 0/2 start into a very respectable 4/9, it kept pouring for Topalov. True to his style, Topalov continued to play ambitiously, but he had one of the most disastrous results of his career. Luckily for him, an inspired last round-win over Levon Aronian provided some consolation. Yet he shed 21 rating points and even dropped out of the top-20.

For Levon Aronian, 2016 was a year in which, to some extent, he managed to stabilize his game, but I miss the optimism and flair his play used to radiate. One has to agree with Gary Kasparov that 'The chess world is a better place when Aronian is playing well!'. In London, Aronian finished on -1 and he will undoubtedly look forward to set things straight in his favourite tournament of Wijk aan Zee.

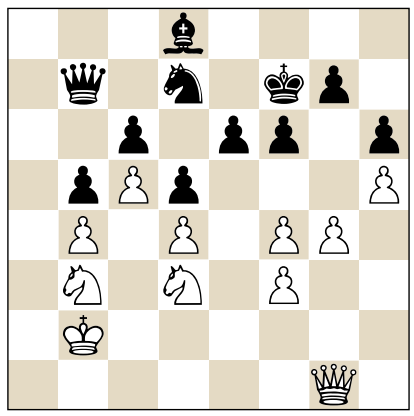
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, on the other hand, had a brilliant 2016. His rating shot up as high as 2819.3 in July, the 7th highest rating of all time. The second half of the year was not as good as the first one, though, as he slowly lost all the ground he had gained. Given the positions he found himself in in London, I believe that the -1 score he finally finished with did not offer him many reasons to complain.

An example was his game against Vladimir Kramnik, in which the Russian uncharacteristically failed to convert an endgame a pawn up. But MVL's game against Topalov, in which the Bulgarian missed a few great opportunities, was perhaps even more telling.

For Anish Giri the London Classic was somewhat frustrating. Spending by far the most hours in the tournament hall and answering 1.e4 only with the Najdorf, Anish showed a lot of fighting chess. And the chances were there as well. Vishy Anand thematically sacrificed a knight on b5 in a Najdorf, only to find it was completely incorrect. Nevertheless he got away with a draw. Giri's game against Topalov can be summed up in two diagrams:

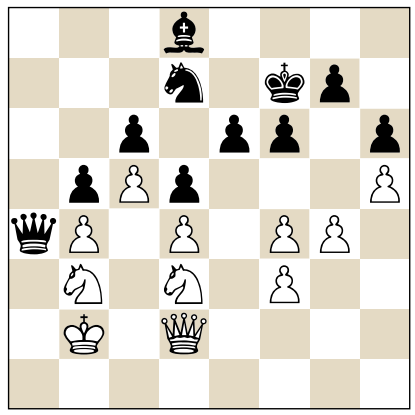
LENNART OOTES

Spending by far the most hours at the board and showing fighting chess, Anish Giri had to settle for a frustrating result as he missed winning chances against Anand and Topalov.



Giri-Topalov
London 2016 (8)
position after 46...♕b7

Queen's Gambit-aficionados may recognize the pawn structure. White had been pressing all along and can now strike with 47.g5!, the idea being that 47...fxg5 48.fxg5 ♗xg5 would run into 49.f4 ♗f6 50.♘e5+ ♘xe5 51.dxe5, followed by ♕g6+, and Black collapses. Instead, Giri continued to shuffle his pieces and got to the following position.



Giri-Topalov
London Classic 2016 (8)
position after 50...♕a4

Black's last move (50...♕a4?!) once again allows 51.g5!, when this time 51...fxg5 52.fxg5 ♗xg5 loses to 53.♕h2!, when the penetration on d6 or c7 decides the game. After those missed chances, Topalov regrouped, brought his king over to b7, and queen to f7, making sure there was no more g5-break. The draw was then quickly agreed upon.

This meant Giri remained 'stuck' on 4½/9, by no means an awful result, but much more could have been possible.

Vladimir Kramnik remains a true joy to watch. Despite remaining the first person to remind everyone that he is already very much a 'senior' player, he managed to stay on the upside of 2800 throughout the entire year, a feat many youngsters would be very content with! Kramnik obviously has good memories when it comes to London, since just a few miles from the London Classic, at Hammersmith, he famously defeated Garry Kasparov 16 years ago.

After winning the first-round grudge match against Veselin Topalov, Kramnik certainly had chances to inflict more damage. Taking home two rating points, Kramnik will start 2017 with 2811 to his name, just seven points shy of his all-time high!

Another legend of the game, five-time World Champion Vishy Anand, also enjoyed himself in London. I could be completely wrong, but I felt that after all these world championship matches the 47-year-old's play at times had seemed a bit lacklustre, as if motivation or a sense of purpose was lacking. More recently, though, Vishy has been living up to his old nickname of the 'Tiger of Madras'. In the Candidates' tournament he showed real determination, and before coming to London he convincingly won the Champions Showdown in St. Louis. In between games Anand looked relaxed, always in a good mood, and this attitude showed in his play. In short, I'm a still a fan! In the following game, Anand showed some excellent opening prep.

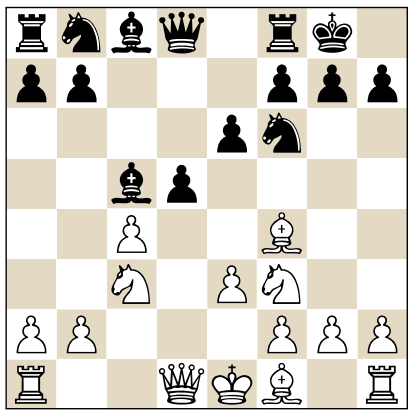
'In between games Vishy looked relaxed, always in a good mood, and this attitude showed in his play. In short, I'm a still a fan!'

Veselin Topalov
Vishy Anand
London 2016 (8)
Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 c5

This move was basically replaced by 6...♘bd7 in recent years, but has seen a steady revival due to efforts by Carlsen and Nakamura. Anand played it twice in this event.

7.dxc5 ♗xc5

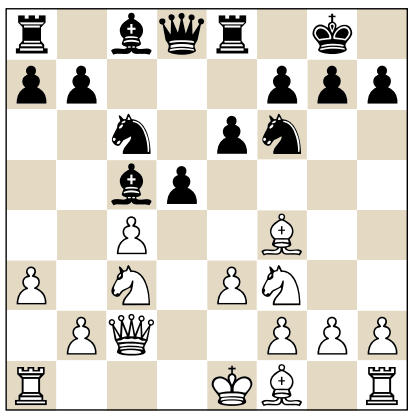


8.a3

8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♘xd5 exd5 is the other approach to this position, in which White claims a small plus based on the isolated pawn. The game continuation is more ambitious.

8...♘c6 9.♕c2 ♖e8

Two years ago, this move was virtually non-existent, the main continuation being 9...♕a5. Game 8, Anand(!)-Carlsen, from the World Championship match in 2014 in Sochi, forced white players to have a look at it. It seems that Vishy liked what he was seeing!

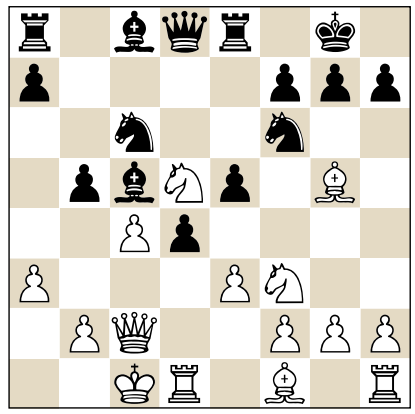


10.0-0-0

10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♖d1 ♕a5 12.♗d3 h6 13.♗h4 dxc4 14.♗xc4 a6 15.0-0 b5 16.♗a2 ♗b7 17.♗b1 ♖ad8 is how that above-mentioned game continued, and because 18.♗xf6 ♗xf6 19.♕h7+ ♔f8 doesn't achieve much, Black has basically equalized here. Once again Topalov chooses the more aggressive option.

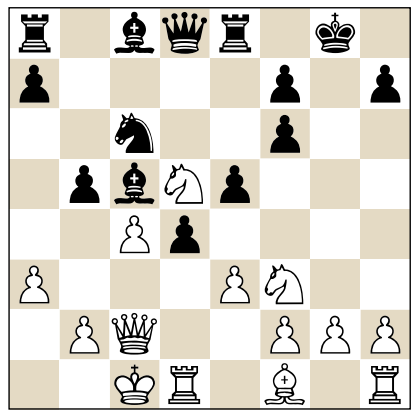
10...e5 11.♗g5 d4 12.♘d5 b5!

It is rare to see novelties with such impact these days! The previously seen 12...♗e7 13.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 14.exd4 gives White chances to fight for an advantage and was undoubtedly what Topalov was hoping for.



13.♗xf6?! And this already seems to be a serious mistake. If there is a way to fight for an advantage, it has to start with 13.cxb5, when 13...♘a5 (a recurring theme, indirectly defending the c5-bishop. 13...♕xd5 14.♗c4 ♕d6 15.bxc6 ♖b8 looks promising after, for instance, 16.exd4? ♗xa3!, but 16.♘xd4! exd4 17.♗f4 leaves White on top) 14.exd4 exd4 15.♘xf6+ gxf6 is a nice starting point for your research!

13...gxf6



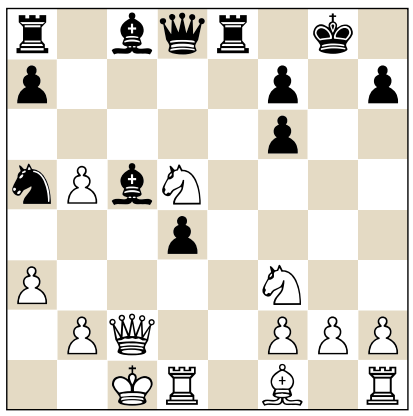
14.cxb5

14.♕e4 is a cute idea, aiming to meet 14...bxc4 with 15.exd4 ♘xd4 16.♘xd4 ♗xd4 17.♖xd4! and 18.♕xe8!, but 14...f5 15.♕h4 ♕xh4 16.♘xh4 ♖d8! is a problem, for instance 17.cxb5 ♖xd5! 18.bxc6 ♗e7 19.♘f3 ♖c5+ 20.♔b1 d3!, and since the pawn is untouchable, Black has a huge advantage.
14.♘d2 ♗e6 15.♘e4 ♗e7 also feels very wrong, which leaves the game continuation.

14...♘a5

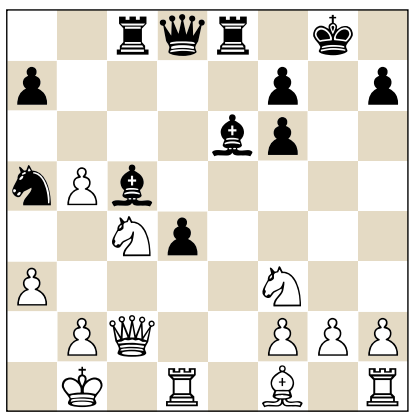
The only move, but a strong one!

15.exd4 exd4



16.♘b4

Afterwards 16.♘e3 was indicated as a more tenacious defence. Indeed, Black would then have to find the strong sequence 16...♗e6 17.♘c4 ♖c8 18.♔b1



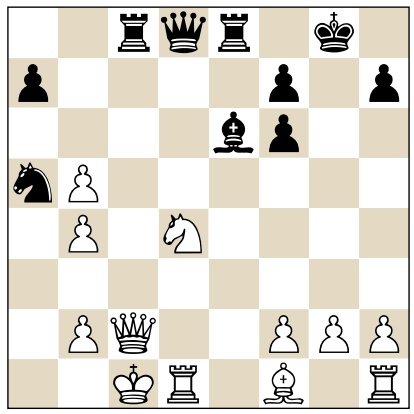
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

18...a6! and White's position falls apart, as the line 19.bxa6 ♕d5 20.♘fd2 ♗xa3! 21.bxa3 (or 21.♕a4 ♗xb2! 22.♕xa5 ♖c5 23.♕a4 ♗d7 24.♕c2 ♗c3!, with a crushing attack) 21...♗f5 22.♗d3 ♘xc4 23.♘xc4 ♖xc4! beautifully illustrates.

LENNART OOTES

Coming out of the playing hall, Veselin Topalov and Vishy Anand exchange thoughts. The Indian star played a great opening novelty but needed the help of his out-of-form opponent to haul in the full point.

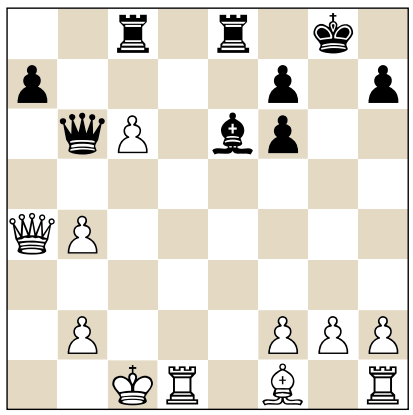
16...♗xb4 17.axb4 ♗e6 18.♘xd4 ♖c8



19.♘c6 Given that it's already time to look for desperate measures, it makes sense to consider whether 19.♘xe6 ♖xc2+ 20.♔xc2 ♕c8+ 21.♘c5 ♘b7 22.♗c4 (after 22.♔b1, 22...♘xc5 23.bxc5 ♕xc5 24.f3 ♕b4 25.♗d3 a6! is an issue) 22...♘xc5 23.bxc5 ♕xc5 24.♔b3 is a fortress. And it may just be after 24...♕xf2 25.♖hf1 ♕e3+ 26.♔a2, when White is nicely coordinated. Black should probably play 24...♖b8, but again I'm not absolutely sure if this wins after 25.♖d2 a6 26.♖hd1 axb5 27.♗d5.

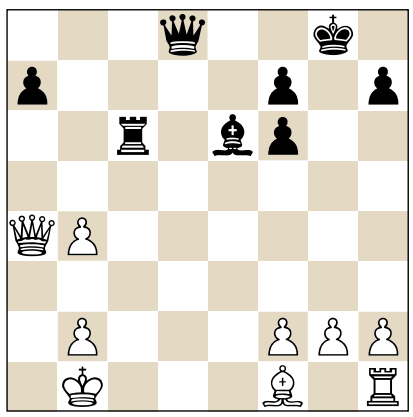
19...♘xc6 20.bxc6 ♕b6 21.♕a4

21.b5 only temporarily fixes the leak, since 21...a6! blasts all files open.



21...♖xc6+?! 21...♗g4!, provoking 22.f3 in order to drop back and use the e3-square, would have been the cherry on the cake: 22...♗f5 23.♗d3 ♕e3+ 24.♔c2 ♕e2+!, and now both 25.♔c3 ♖e3 and 25.♖d2 ♗xd3+ lose on the spot.

22.♔b1 ♖d8 23.♖xd8+ ♕xd8



24.♗e2

Because 24.♕xc6 ♕d1+ 25.♕c1 ♗f5+! 26.♗d3 ♗xd3+ 27.♔a2 ♕a4 is just mate!

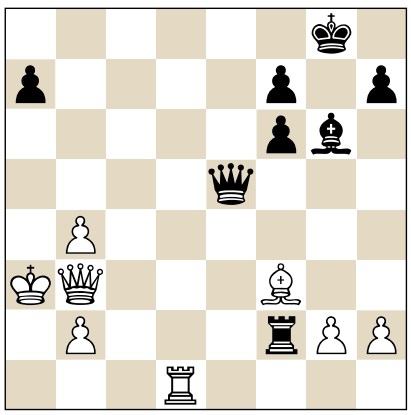
24...♗f5+ 25.♔a2 ♖c2?!

25...♕d6! would have prevented White from regrouping with 26.♖d1 in view of 26...♕e6+, followed by 27...♗c2!.

26.♖d1 ♕b6

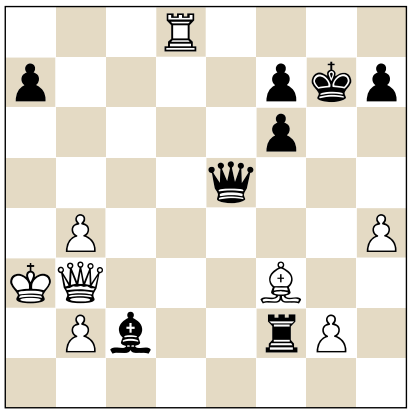
26...♕c7 27.♕e8+ ♔g7 28.♖d8 ♗e6+ 29.♔a3 ♕c3+! 30.♔a4 ♕b3+ 31.♔a5 ♖xe2 32.♕h8+ ♔h6 33.♕xf6+ ♔h5 34.♖d4 ♖e4 was a fun line Vishy showed at the press conference, but 28.♕e3! is a big improvement.

27.♗g4 ♕e6+ 28.♔a3 ♕e5 29.♕b3 ♗g6 30.♗f3 ♖xf2



31.h4? Just as he got back into the game, Veselin goes astray. Both 31.♕c3 and 31.♖d5 would have kept the balance reasonably comfortably.

31...♗c2! 32.♖d8+ ♔g7

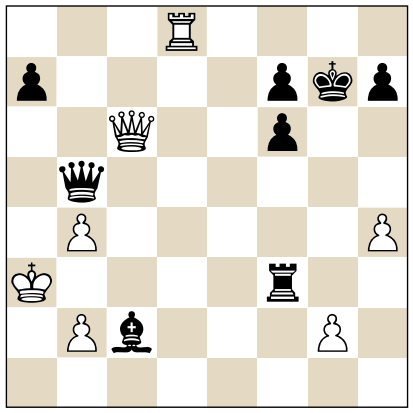


33.♕c3??

Let me throw in the old cliché that mistakes don't come alone.

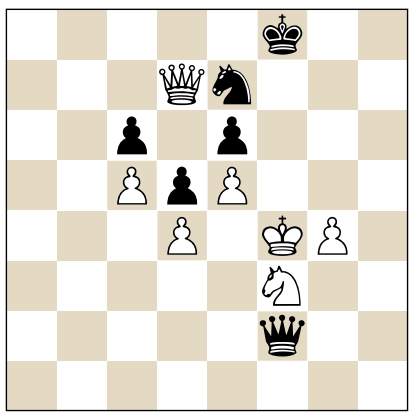
33.♕c4 ♕e3+ 34.♔a2 ♗f5 35.♕c5! ♗e6+ 36.♔b1 ♖f1+ 37.♖d1 would still have given decent fighting chances!

33...♕b5 34.♕c6 ♖xf3+!



And White resigned. He is mated after 35.♕xf3 ♕a6.

His early hiccough against So might have ruined Hikaru Nakamura's tournament, but he fought back with determination. In an amazing effort, Nakamura was already back on +1 after Round 4, and if not for an incredible save by Kramnik, that would have been +2 after 5 rounds.



Nakamura-Kramnik
London 2016 (5)
position after 52.♕d7

With his last move, 52.♕b7-d7, Nakamura basically forces Black's reply, as 52...♔f7 53.g5! ♕c2 54.g6+ ♕xg6 55.♘g5+ wins swiftly.

52...♘g6+ 53.♔g5 ♕xf3 54.♕xe6 This is what Nakamura had in mind when he sacrificed the knight. After, for instance, 54...♘e7 55.♕f6+ ♕xf6+ both recaptures on f6 win easily, but Kramnik now comes up with a great magic trick.

54...♘h8! 55.♕f5+ Because 55.♕f6+ ♘f7+! would now even lose!

55...♘f7+ 56.♔f6 ♕xf5+ 57.gxf5 And remarkably, after **57...♘d8 58.e6 ♘f7!** the classic stalemate trick saves the day!

Nakamura would eventually end the tournament on plus 1, but only after a few more adventures. In Round 6, Naka found himself on the wrong side of one of the more spectacular games of the tournament. Fabiano Caruana was happy to annotate it!

NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

Fabiano Caruana
Hikaru Nakamura
London 2016 (6)
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

This game was played in Round 6. Besides a (very) lucky win against Topalov, I hadn't achieved much in terms of results in the last five games, so I felt this game was a good moment to make a move in the tournament.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

The Najdorf didn't come as a surprise, since I felt Hikaru would try to get a sharp game. He also needed to win to stay in contention for first. However, my next move probably came as a surprise, since I haven't essayed it in years.

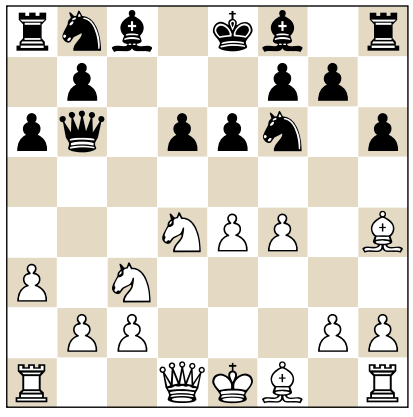
6.♗g5 e6

6...♘bd7 is what Hikaru usually relied on in the past, when he was a more active Najdorf player. It seems as if he did some work in the ...h6/...♕b6 line and had prepared it for this tournament, but he ended up running into a position I had analysed extensively pretty recently. Sometimes the fruits of chess work are reaped in unexpected ways.

7.f4 h6 8.♗h4 ♕b6

This is the delayed Poisoned Pawn – or I guess we can call it the MVL Variation – most of the important recent theoretical games in this line belong to him. Compared to the normal Poisoned Pawn Variation, Black avoids some of White's important options, but also allows him an important alternative:

9.a3!?



After this the pawn on b2 is truly poisoned, because taking it would cost Black his queen. With the bishop on g5, a3 would be considered harmless, but now the bishop can safely drop back to f2 and harass Black's queen.

9...♗e7

As 9...♕xb2?? 10.♘a4 traps the poor queen.

Interestingly, Maxime chose 9...♘bd7 against me years ago, and I replied 10.♗c4 and soon achieved an advantage.

10.♗f2 ♕c7 11.♕f3 ♘bd7 12.0-0-0 b5 13.g4

This had all been seen before, and now Black faces a choice.

13...g5

The most direct move, aiming to gain control of the e5-square. This is also the move Maxime chose to play against Anish Giri earlier in 2016.

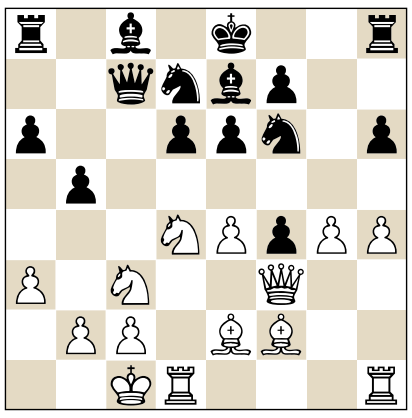
The really funny thing is that Hikaru decided to repeat this line from the white side in the next round! Maxime chose to deviate with 13...♗b7 14.♗g2 ♖c8 15.♔b1 g5, and here 16.♕h3! seemed to come as a surprise to him, and his position soon became very difficult. Hikaru won a game which I consider one of the most impressive of the tournament. The ball is still in Black's court!

14.h4 gxf4 15.♗e2!

This move, played in the aforementioned Giri-Vachier-Lagrave game, and also in several correspondence games, still looks bizarre to me, but it is unbelievably strong and pretty much refutes 13...g5. White connects rooks, turning g5 into a nasty threat.

LENNART OOTES

The clash between American Champion Fabiano Caruana and his rival Hikaru Nakamura, ended in a victory for the White player. 'Sometimes the fruits of chess work are reaped in unexpected ways.'



15...b4?!

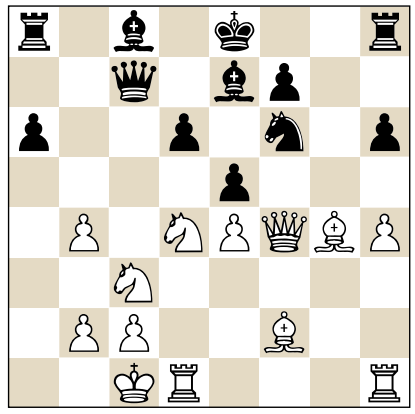
This shows that Hikaru had prepared this variation, and prepared an improvement over Maxime's play. The only problem with his prep is that there is a flaw with the computer's evaluation of a key position.

15...♖g8 was Maxime's choice, and Anish had a novel reaction – losing a clearly better position one move after his prep ended: 16.♖dg1?? (16.♖hg1 is a better rook to move. Or 16.g5 hxg5 17.hxg5 ♘e5 18.♕xf4 ♘fd7, and now the spectacular 19.♘xe6!! fxe6 20.♖h7!, with ♗h5+ coming next and a strong attack. The seemingly winning 20...♗xg5 fails to 21.♗h5+ ♔d8 22.♗h4!, and Black loses) 16...d5, and White is already much worse and never recovered in the game.

16.axb4

Now everything is completely forced:

16...♘e5 17.♕xf4 ♘exg4 18.♗xg4 e5



19.♕xf6!

A spectacular queen sac, which definitely did not come as a surprise to Nakamura. However, he misjudged the resulting position.

19.♘d5? ♘xd5 20.♕f3 ♘xb4 reveals the big idea behind 15...b4, but luckily I dodged that bullet.

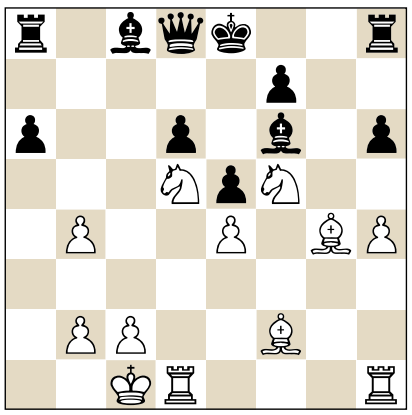
19...♗xf6 20.♘d5 ♕d8 21.♘f5!

This is the move he had missed in his preparation. Actually, we made this

For the eighth time the Olympia conference centre was the venue of the London Chess Classic.

NEW IN CHESS

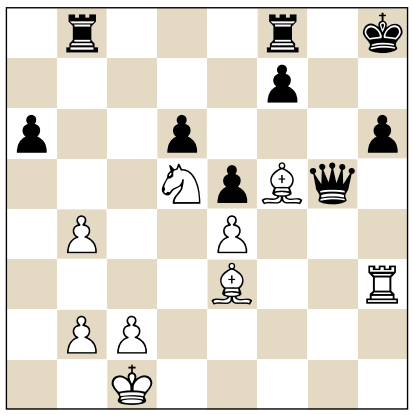
move in a training game pretty automatically, as it just feels right, and once you see how the position looks from the Black side over the board, you realize how dire his situation is. I'm sure Hikaru realized very quickly that he had run head first into a lost position.



21...♖b8

This is losing on the spot, but under the circumstances Black really has nothing better. At least this forces me to calculate a few variations to win, whereas after 21...♗xf5 the win is nearly automatic.

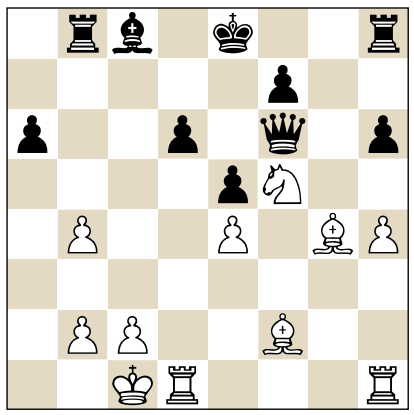
21...♗xf5 22.♗xf5 is just sad to look at. The unassailable knight on d5 and the bishop on f5 dominate the board. In particular, Black's 'extra' queen has no moves whatsoever: 22...♖b8 23.♖d3 (23.c4, with c5 to come, is no less strong) 23...0-0 (23...♖b5 24.c4 ♖xd5 25.♖xd5 ♕b8 26.c5 is crushing) 24.♖g1+ ♔h8 25.♖dg3!. This stops ...♖g8 and prepares ♗e3 and ♗xh6. Black is helpless against the threats: 25...♗xh4 26.♖h3 ♗g5+ 27.♖xg5! ♕xg5+ 28.♗e3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and Black is beautifully dominated: 28...♕g7. Here even the sadistic 29.b3! leaves Black without moves and dead lost.

22.♘xf6+ ♕xf6



23.♖xd6?

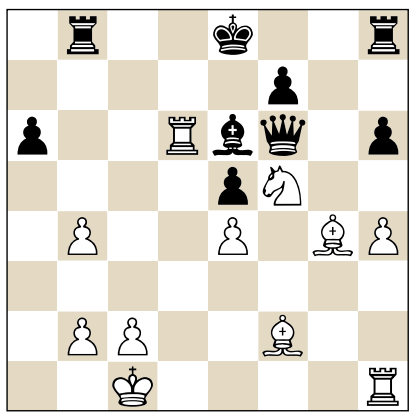
This doesn't spoil the position, but it prolongs the game by a lot.

Best was 23.♘xd6+, and now:

– 23...♔f8. Here I didn't see how to continue, which is funny because I played the winning idea later in the game. But here it remained hidden to me. 24.♗f5! Once I was told of this move after the game, I immediately realized how devastating it is. White's knight again gets control of f5 and dominates Black's king: 24...♗xf5 25.♘xf5, with ♗c5+ and ♖d6 next.

– 23...♔e7 24.♗c5! ♕f4+ (24...♗xg4 25.♘b5+ mates the poor black king: 25...♔e8 26.♘c7 mate) 25.♔b1 ♕xg4 (25...♗xg4 26.♘f5+ ♔e8 27.♘g7 mate is a curious mirror of the previous mate) 26.♘xc8+ ♔e8 27.♘d6+ ♔d7 28.♘xf7+, and White picks up everything, with a winning position.

23...♗e6



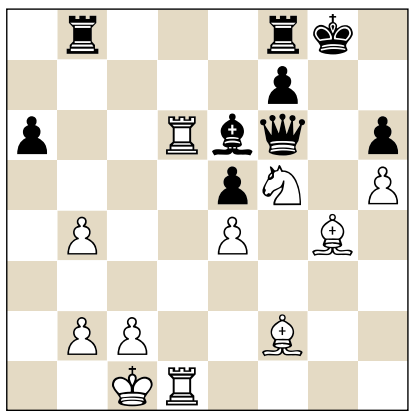
24.♖hd1

24.♗e3! is possibly even stronger, but the move doesn't feel entirely natural to me. The bishop just wants to be on c5! The lines after this are far from simple to work out: 24...♖xb4 25.♖xa6 0-0 26.♘xh6+ ♔h8 27.♗f5! (that familiar theme)

27...♕d8 28.♖g1!, with ♘xf7+ as a deadly threat. We see many of these same recurring themes throughout the game.

24...0-0 25.h5!

This was the point behind my last move. When I saw it, I knew Black would be in big trouble. The threat of ♗h4 will either win the queen back or force it to the pathetic h8-square.



25...♕g5+?! Highly unexpected, but the move does make sense. Hikaru is provoking the bishop to go to e3.

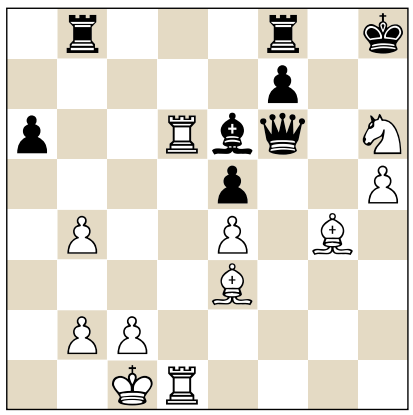
25...♖xb4 26.♗h4 ♗xf5 (26...♕xh4? 27.♘xh4 ♗xg4 28.♖g1 ♖xe4 and here 29.♘f5! was very important to see. The bishop on g4 is in serious trouble) 27.♗xf6 ♗xg4 28.♖g1 ♖xe4 29.♖xa6. I figured this endgame with the two connected passed pawns would offer very good winning chances, but the game isn't over yet.

25...♖fe8 26.♗h4 ♕h8 is really not a solution to Black's problems. After a simple move like 27.c3 ♔h7 28.♘e3!, and 29.♗f5+ next, Black still faces a strong attack.

26.♗e3 ♕f6 27.♘xh6+

The only issue is I can grab this pawn.

27...♔h8



28.♗f5

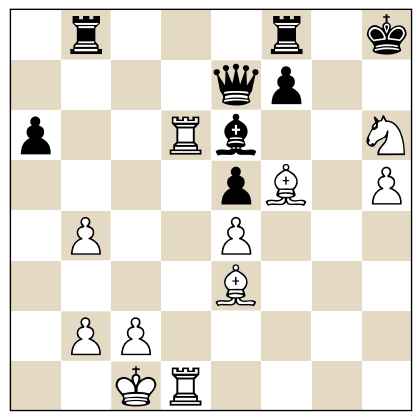
A fine move, but it should have been seen far earlier, when I was thinking about 23.♖xd6 or 23.♘xd6!.

28.♘xf7+! is even more direct and even stronger: 28...♕xf7 (28...♖xf7 29.♗xe6 ♕f3 30.♗xf7 ♕xe3+ 31.♔b1, and Black's king will not survive for very long here) 29.♖xe6 ♖bd8. I thought this was a clever defence, based on a back rank checkmate, but there is a simple refutation: 30.♖xd8! (definitely not 30.♖g1?? ♕f1+ 31.♖xf1 ♖xf1+, oops!) 30...♖xd8 31.♗f5!, and this is resignation. The bishops control the board.

28...♕e7?

This one loses immediately.

I had expected 28...♖fe8, to prevent 29.♘xf7+. Now White has a wide choice of enticing options, such as 29.♖g1 (or even the simple 29.c3) 29...♖xb4 30.♖xa6, with a decisive advantage.



29.b5!?

I actually have an explanation for this weird move.

Of course the first move I looked at was 29.♘xf7+, but I didn't see a clear win after 29...♖xf7 30.♖xe6 ♕xb4 31.♖h6+ ♔g8 32.♖g1+ ♖g7 33.♗e6+ ♔f8, and here the winning move is 34.♗c5+! (34.♖h8+ ♔e7 35.♖xg7+? ♔d6! is surprisingly not clear because of the mating threat on e1) 34...♕xc5 35.♖h8+ ♔e7 36.♖xg7+ ♔d6 37.♖xb8. I calculated all this and saw 37...♕g1+!?, which I assumed would be a perpetual after 38.♔d2 ♕d4+. I don't think I need to point out the hidden resource I overlooked!

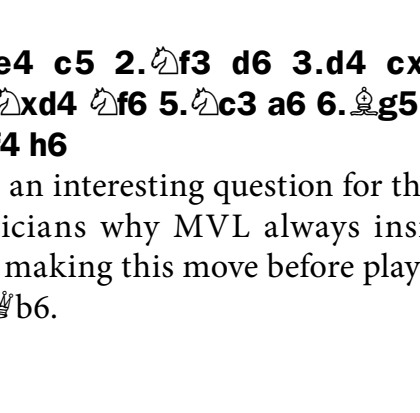
29...♕e8

So my explanation is 29...♖xb5 30.♘xf7+ ♖xf7 31.♖xe6 ♕b4, and here I can use the back rank because the rook was lured to b5!: 32.♖d8+ ♖f8 33.♖h6+ ♔g7 34.♖g6+ ♔h8 35.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 36.♗g5!, and 37.♗f6+ next wins.

29...axb5 30.♘xf7+ ♖xf7 31.♖xe6, and now the b-file is closed, so 31...♕b4 comes with no threat.

30.♘xf7+ Now it's even better.

30...♖xf7 31.♖xe6 ♕xb5 32.♖h6+



Hikaru resigned, since the queen on b5 is no longer threatening ...♕e1, mate. Everything becomes simple.

32...♔g8 33.♖g1+ ♔f8 (33...♖g7 34.♗e6+ ♔f8 35.♖h8+ ♔e7 36.♖xg7+ ♔d6 37.♖xb8, and now there is no 37...♕e1 mate) 34.♖h8+ ♔e7 35.♖xb8 ♕xb8 36.♗c5+, winning the queen or mating on the next move.

■ ■ ■

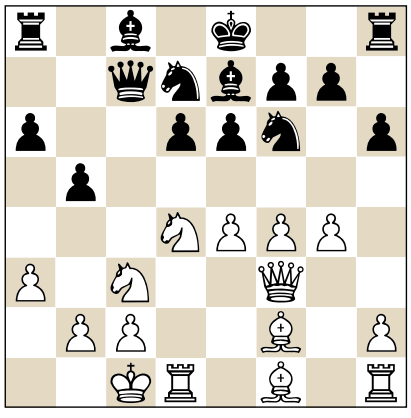
Usually players tend to want to discard a line after suffering a painful defeat in it. As Caruana already indicated in his notes, Nakamura took the opposite approach! He applied the lesson he had learned... the next day!

Hikaru Nakamura
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
London 2016 (7)
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 h6

It's an interesting question for theoreticians why MVL always insists on making this move before playing ...♕b6.

8.♗h4 ♕b6 9.a3 ♗e7 10.♗f2 ♕c7 11.♕f3 ♘bd7 12.0-0-0 b5 13.g4

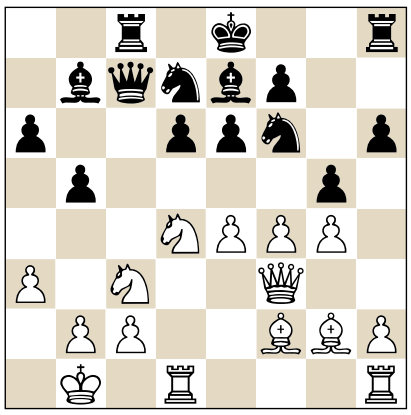


13...♗b7 For 13...g5 – see above. MVL now deviates from an earlier game he played against Giri in Stavanger. It was precisely the positional queen sacrifice that Caruana introduced that we had prepared for that game. MVL managed to dodge that bullet and even won the game, but I was particularly interested to see where MVL would improve, given that in the opening he had been much worse.

14.♗g2 ♖c8 15.♔b1

15.♕h3!? is a venomous alternative here, although 15...g6, with the idea of covering f5 before playing ...e5, may keep the balance.

15...g5 A typical move, fighting for the e5-square. All these moves were played rather fast, but after Nakamura's next move, MVL sank into thought.



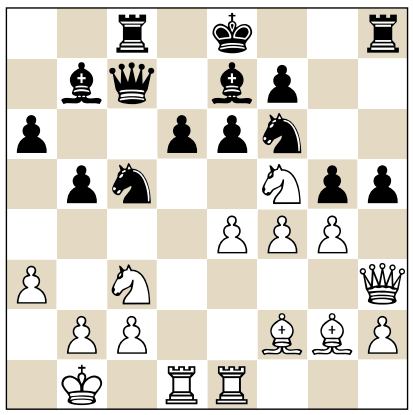
16.♕h3!? 16.h4 gxf4 17.g5 doesn't quite manage to upset Black after 17...♘e5 18.♕xf4 ♘fd7.

16...♘c5? The downside of the Najdorf, compared to, for instance, the Ruy Lopez, is that each move has enormous value, meaning that one mistake can already be decisive. We have a case in point here.

A few correspondence games have continued 16...♘h7 17.e5 ♗xg2 18.♕xg2 gxf4 19.exd6 ♗xd6 20.♖he1 ♗e5, which may actually hold, despite not inspiring much confidence.

17.♖he1 h5 18.♘f5!

Very classy!



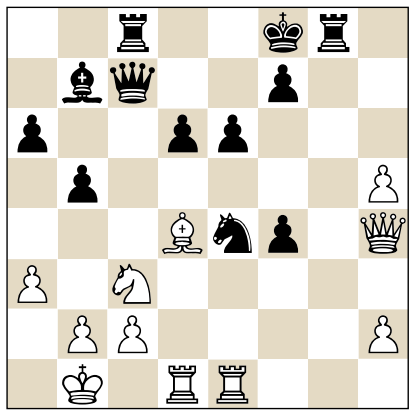
18...♘cxe4

18...exf5 19.exf5 is a pretty picture. There is just no way Black can survive this, while 18...♘xg4 19.♗d4 e5 20.fxe5 ♘xe5 leaves Black a pawn up but positionally busted. For instance 21.♗xe5 dxe5 22.♘d5 ♗xd5 23.exd5, and total collapse is imminent.

19.♗xe4 ♘xe4 20.♗d4 ♖g8 21.♘xe7 ♔xe7 22.gxh5 gxf4

Materially speaking, Black is quite alright, but it's all about the kings now!

23.♕h4+ ♔f8



24.♔a1

24.h6! e5 25.h7 ♖h8 26.♔a1!, avoiding any checks on c2, was hard to spot, but much more convincing. After the further 26...♘xc3 27.♗xc3

LENNART OOTES

Of course, Hikaru Nakamura was all smiles. What do you do when you lose on the Black side of a 6.♗g5 Najdorf? You play 6.♗g5 yourself the next day to beat arguably the world's biggest expert!

the hunting season is opened, with ♕h6+, followed by sacrifices on e5, in the air.

24...b4

24...♕e7!? 25.♕xf4 ♕g5 was a good attempt to stay in the game. Not more than that, though, since the problems in Black's position are of a chronic nature.

With the game continuation MVL is trying to provoke axb4 in order to have perpetual check ideas with ...♕xc2-a4-c2 at a later stage. White is by no means forced to take on b4, though.

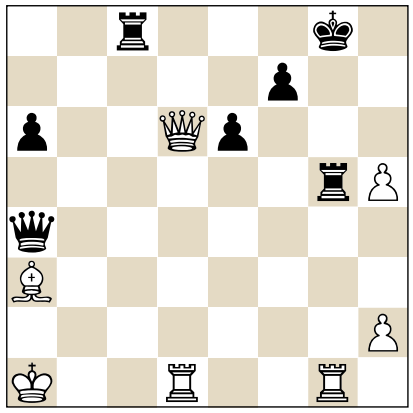
25.♘xe4

Or even 25.h6 bxc3 26.h7!.

25...♗xe4 26.♖xe4 ♕xc2 27.♖ee1 bxa3 28.♕xf4 axb2+ 29.♗xb2

Black has given a piece to get to the enemy king, but with the dust cleared it's again the king on f8 that has more to worry about.

29...♖g5 30.♕xd6+ ♔g8 31.♖g1 ♕a4+ 32.♗a3



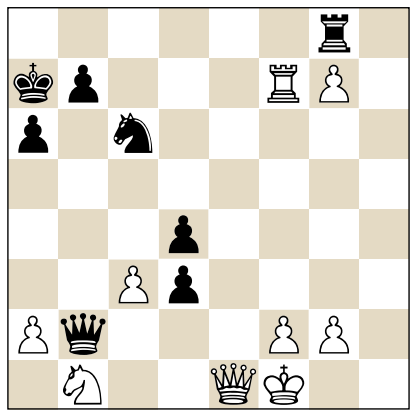
32...♖xg1? This makes it way too easy. Instead 32...♔h7 33.♖xg5 ♖d8! was a beautiful attempt to save the game. Taking the rook obviously leads to a draw, but White is still winning after, for instance, 34.♕d3+ ♖xd3 35.♖xd3, although some technique is still required.

33.♖xg1+ ♔h7 34.♕d3+ ♔h6 35.♖g6+! ♔xh5 36.♖g1 f5 37.♕f3+ Black resigned.

Remarkable to see Nakamura's adventures in this variation!

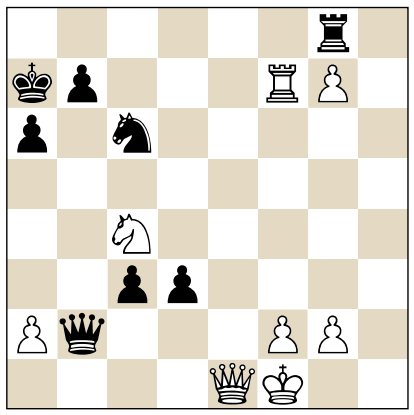
■ ■ ■

It's safe to say that Caruana used 2016 to reaffirm his status as the number 2 player in the world. In London, the American Champion's play was not that convincing, but that makes scoring +2 all the more impressive. His cool-headedness against Topalov in Round 2 was remarkable.



Topalov-Caruana
London 2016 (2)
position after 34...d4

One can still see the shapes of a game that got completely out of hand. Both players had missed various chances at this point, but with Caruana down to a minute, Topalov, true to style, opportunistically played **35.♘d2,** followed within seconds by **35...dxc3 36.♘c4**. This looks horribly strong; not only is the queen hanging on b2, but 37.♕e3+ is a major threat, followed by 38.♖f8+ if the king moves to the back rank. With seconds ticking away, Caruana lashed out:



36...♖e8!! and suddenly... it's all over! Now 37.♕xe8 ♕c1+ 38.♕e1 d2! decides, and so did **37.♖xb7+ ♕xb7 38.♕xe8 ♕b1+** And Veselin resigned, as after 39.♕e1 c2 there is no stopping the imminent mate.

Which takes us back to the man of the moment: Wesley So. Having won his first two games, Wesley played the remainder of the tournament very professionally. In Round 6, he increased his lead by defeating Topalov. In Round 8, the big clash with Fabiano Caruana was awaiting him. Caruana, with the white pieces, was trailing by half a point and really needed a win in order to fight for tournament victory. But he never got the game going, and when the queens were exchanged on move 14, it was already clear that the game would probably end in a draw.

That meant that Wesley So not only ended the year 2016 as the Grand Chess Tour winner, but also as the winner of the London Classic, totalling his prize-money to 295k dollars. Not a bad year! It will be very interesting to see what 2017 has in store for Wesley. Since both Kramnik and Kasparov have mentioned him as a future contender for the crown, this may only be the beginning. ■

London 2016 — **cat. XXII**

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
1	**Wesley So**	IGM	USA	2794	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	6	2909
2	**Fabiano Caruana**	IGM	USA	2823	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	5½	2861
3	**Vladimir Kramnik**	IGM	RUS	2809	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	5	2825
4	**Vishy Anand**	IGM	IND	2779	½	½	½	*	0	½	½	1	½	1	5	2828
5	**Hikaru Nakamura**	IGM	USA	2779	0	0	½	1	*	½	½	1	½	1	5	2828
6	**Anish Giri**	IGM	NED	2771	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	4½	2786
7	**Levon Aronian**	IGM	ARM	2785	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	0	1	0	4	2742
8	**Maxime Vachier-Lagrave**	IGM	FRA	2804	½	½	½	0	0	½	1	*	½	½	4	2740
9	**Michael Adams**	IGM	ENG	2748	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	*	1	4	2746
10	**Veselin Topalov**	IGM	BUL	2760	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	0	*	2	2568

‘If you play Magnus, you have to think you are better than him.’

Interview Wesley So

Although he already was a grandmaster at the age of 14, he keeps stressing that he only became a chess professional two years ago. And he is making strides. With his win in the London Classic, 23-year-old Wesley So crossed the magic 2800 barrier and climbed to 4th place in the world rankings. An apt moment for an interview about his new coach, his confidence and ambitions, and the role of his family. ‘Lotis is the primary person who is making me less afraid of the World Champion.’

DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM

Wesley So and his manager and mother Lotis Key on Kensington High Street, London.
'Lotis is extremely competitive and has instilled some of that competitiveness in me.'

After he has drawn his last-round game against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and paid a last visit to the live broadcast, Wesley So is ready to leave the Olympia Conference Centre. It is unclear how long the remaining games will take and he has no wish to hang around. He is happy and smiles, but most of the celebrating is going on in his thoughts. Yesterday, with a round to spare, he has become the overall winner of the 2016 Grand Chess Tour, and now it is fairly certain that he will be the sole winner of the London Chess Classic, too. Only if Fabiano Caruana defeats Anish Giri with the black pieces will there be a tiebreak. So has taken a final glance at the position in that game and knows that this is a highly unlikely scenario.

Lotis Key, always at his side, suggests we go to the Hilton for Wesley and me to talk. They have access to the Executive Lounge, where it's nice and quiet.

The distance between the Olympia and the Hilton is only a couple of hundred metres, and Lotis promises tournament director Malcolm Pein that they will be back for the prize-giving as soon as the last game ends. Outside, on Kensington High Street, Lotis takes Wesley's hand, and this is how they walk back to the hotel. For others, a 23-year-old young man walking hand in hand with a woman of Lotis' age may be an unusual sight, but for me their closeness is no longer a surprise. This is also how they and the other members of the family, Wesley's stepfather Renato and his stepsister Abbey, hold hands when saying a prayer before meals, as I

witnessed on a couple of occasions. In a warm and natural manner. Never once did they ask me about my beliefs or why I didn't pray.

Finding his new family has been a watershed in Wesley's life and career. Repeatedly he points out that he only became a professional chess player two years ago, after he left the chess programme of Susan Polgar and her husband Paul Truong at Webster University and finally found a home in Minnesota (see the interview in New In Chess 2015/4). The drama and turmoil around the break-up with the Polgars, Wesley now sees as water under the bridge, and Lotis has stopped paying attention to Truong's acrimonious Facebook posts a long time ago.

Likewise, they no longer want to think about the bitter dispute with Wesley's natural mother and the way she used his savings. About a year ago they reached a settlement, and part of the settlement is that Wesley is not allowed to speak about the details. There's no such restriction for Lotis, and she indicates that Wesley lost most of the money that he had entrusted to his natural parents.

'I used to be afraid to play against certain people, but once I got rid of that fear, I play better.'

If Wesley's professional career started two years ago, the results have been impressive. You can't argue with success. From an aspiring young talent he has transformed into an elite player who is winning major tournaments and now ranks fourth in the world with a 2808 rating.

As we sit down in a quiet corner of the Executive Lounge, Lotis receives a niece, who lives in London, and her kids at the other end of the room. The first question I ask Wesley is about his new confidence.

'Of course everyone here is nervous. The final leg of the Grand Chess Tour... you can't help but be nervous. But at the same time I am more confident than before. This year alone I have played so many games against the world's greatest chess players. That experience has helped me grow. I wasn't expecting to win this tournament before it started, just wanted to give it my best. We have our routine now, what we do in the tournaments. I am feeling more and more comfortable with that and my rating has increased since the Sinquefield Cup this August. I have changed the way I work on chess quite a bit, it's based on trial and error. I have sparred with some players. I notice how they work, I talk with them. I try to find out how other top players work on chess in general before tournaments. Now I feel I have found the ideal approach. Before this, I spent too much time working on the computer. For example, spending a lot of time on openings every day and in the end not being able to use my analysis. Working for many hours with computers has a bad effect on your chess, because you are trying to memorize lines. But you can't memorize everything; you need to have an understanding of what to do after that.

'Right now I have only one coach that I work with. So far we have not made this public, but I can tell you, it's Vladimir Tukmakov. We've been working together for six months and I am going to keep him for at least another year. We're happy with the way it's going and with the results I have had recently. We work online, on Skype. Because it's hard to bring foreign players to Minnesota. Of course, I'd prefer to work face to face with players, but right now it's hard to see that happening. We work on endgames, on the games of top players, even old classics like Kasparov, Karpov. We study their games. Hopefully I can play like them one day. And we make plans and strategies about what I should do against this player or that. Tukmakov also gives me valuable experience and insights that sometimes are new

NEW IN CHESS

Playing on Board 3, behind Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura, Wesley So was the cornerstone of Team USA at the Baku Olympiad, with a 2896 performance.

to me. How this or that player will react. Also this London Chess Classic is different from others. We knew the colours and pairings beforehand, more than a month in advance. When I came here I already had general ideas.

'I work a lot on different areas, I try to eliminate my weaknesses. I look at the games I have lost and try to find the reason why I lost. And try to avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Both technical and psychological. I used to be afraid to play against certain people, but once I got rid of that fear, I play better.'

What better way to study chess? A chess set within reach, a purring computer and a snoozing cat on your lap.

How do you get rid of such fear? Just seeing them as human beings?
'Yes, to see that they are human. For example, Magnus, he makes mistakes. Even if he is the best chess player, you should not come in there thinking he is the best. If you play him you have to think that you are better than him, even if objectively you're not. Because if you go in thinking, oh, he is the best player in the world, it will make you prone to make mistakes, and it won't give you the courage to fight for a win.'

When did you begin to feel that this work was bearing fruit?
'I think during the first few legs of the Grand Chess Tour, in Paris and in Leuven. I had started this way of training, and I played relatively well and was happy with the results. I moved faster and I had good opening preparation. Then I played in Bilbao, where my results were only so-so. After that I went to the Sinquefield Cup, not sure what was going to happen. But things worked out well. I caught Hikaru (Nakamura) in an opening trap and won in Round 1, and that was a huge boost to my confidence. I had never won such a super-tournament before. After that we went to the Olympiad with a very strong team and we were so inspired. And now this, winning London, unimaginable. But at the same time I will keep working and not let these achievements slow me down.'

Many people told you over the years that you have this potential, and you didn't believe them. Why do you have this belief now?
'I realized that I spent a lot of time on chess, and if I spend that much time on one thing, I want to reach the highest level that I can. And in general, if you believe in yourself, and you have a strong confidence that you are better than your opponent, then you will do well. There are no advantages coming into the game fearful and thinking you are not going to win. It also helps that there are more than one or two people who tell you that you are really talented (laughs). Coming from the Philippines and a very humble background, I didn't expect much of myself. Now my family are telling me, and other friends, other chess people.'

Not so long ago you had to convince yourself that you were not worse than the others. But now you are even telling yourself that you are better than them.
'Yeah, even if it's not true! Why not? Two years ago, when I started playing chess professionally, I mean really full-time, when I stopped college, this was very new to me. Of course, playing all these legends, like Magnus or Fabiano (Caruana) or Kramnik, seeing their names I paid too much respect to them. Not that they don't deserve it, but in order to compete with them you should not go in there wanting to have their autograph or your picture taken with them. I was really impressed with Magnus.'

You would almost ask him for his autograph?
'(Laughs) Yes. In fact, I did a few years ago. It was in 2011 when he invited me to work with him for more than a week in Spain, in Palma. I asked for an autograph on a chessboard and I still have that.'

Are there any other autographs on it?
'No, just him. I still have a high respect for him. Magnus, who can be the greatest chess player ever. And Fabiano, the number two player in the world and very consistent. They deserve respect for being so good in their career, but at the same time I don't pay them so much respect that I become afraid of them.'

And there is no limit to your ambitions.
'At the end of the day, I want to be World Champion, but I think every chess player wants to be that. I don't

know if I'll achieve it, but I will try my best. We spend a lot of time on my chess career, so why not? Before this tournament I was not sure if I could ever make it to 2800, but now I have achieved it. I can look back and say I am happy I have achieved it and I am looking forward to my next goal.'

What did you think the next day when you woke up? So now I am a 2800 player?
'Yeah, yeah. I mean, it's a dream come true. It's like when you're a grandmaster, you always want to achieve 2600. When you are 2600, you want to achieve 2700. And then I wasn't sure I was ever going to get to 2800. Now I am here and my next goal is to maintain my ranking and my rating. Which is not easy. As they say, you can get there, but to stay there is more difficult.'

It's been an incredibly successful year. You crossed 2800, you won the Olympiad, you won the Sinquefield Cup, the Grand Chess Tour...
'Yeah, as I said, I didn't expect all those things. Winning the Olympiad was huge and is comparable to winning the Grand Chess Tour. I am happy to do it for my country. Unfortunately, chess is not part of the Olympics, but winning the Olympiad is really like achieving an Olympic gold medal. The United States hadn't won gold in 40 years and winning that is huge.'

In fact, you were the key player of the team. Scoring 8½ from 10 with a 2896 performance.
'Well, everyone played his part and was a key member...'

Ah, you're going to be modest...
'(Laughs) Well, I just played my best. It was my first time playing for the United States, and before the tournament I thought we had good chances to win, with Fabiano and Hikaru on the team. But as the games progressed, I realized you shouldn't only depend on your team mates, because there are only four boards and accidents can happen... So after that 2-2 draw with the Czech Republic in Round 4, I realized that I really needed to give my best. If I was not going to make it for the team then accidents could happen. That doesn't mean that Hikaru or Fabiano or Sam (Shankland) could not do it, but there were only four boards per match. And this year was a highly competitive Olympiad. We had 20 match points out of 11 matches and we almost didn't win gold. Before you only needed 18 or 19 match points. But with the Ukrainian team and Volokitin doing so well, it was extremely competitive. Even winning my last two games wasn't a guarantee that we were going to win. But now I can look back and say that we did it and got the gold medal and that's forever.'

'In a team event you shouldn't depend on your teammates, but instead you should give your best yourself to help them win.'

Apparently, you felt a great responsibility. Did you feel you took a leading role in the team?
'No, I didn't feel like that. I mean, Fabiano was playing Board 1, but it doesn't really matter whether you are on Board 1 or Board 4, at the end of the day you're a team. I just contributed to help the team get a gold medal. Again, in a team event you shouldn't depend on your teammates, but instead you should give your best yourself to help them win.'

If you look at the American top players, it is clear that Nakamura and Caruana have got much more publicity over the past years. But if we look at 2016, it wouldn't be far-fetched to call you the Player of the Year, worldwide.
'Well, there is always Magnus...

Sure, he has won several tournaments, but he had difficulty winning the World Championship match. One might argue that it would be between you and him.
'(Hesitates) Oh well, thank you. I am not really thinking about who was the player of the year. I think it's too early for me to get that kind of award. I just want to try to improve every day and hopefully, maybe one day I will get there. I think it's too early this year. You had Maxime (Vachier-Lagrave), who had this amazing climb, we got Fabiano who is always number two in the world. (Laughs in some embarrassment) We got Magnus. Even though he had difficulties winning the match, he is still number one by quite a big margin. But hopefully one day I will get there. I have many Filipino fans who follow my games; they help contribute to my publicity. I am very thankful for them watching and following my games.'

The majority of your followers are Filipino?
'Yes, but Filipinos from all over the world. Also in the United States, of course. The Philippines are a great catholic country, so when we post comments about thanking the Lord, these are really well appreciated. The good thing about Facebook is that if you get any bad comments, or naughty people, you can just ignore them.'

When I watched you concentrate before the game against Caruana yesterday, for some 10-15 seconds you closed your eyes. Is that to get into the game?
'I have been doing that before some

No more home alone. These days he can rely on his biggest supporters: Abbey, Lotis Key and Renato Kabigting.

important games recently. In general coming to the game you want to have a clear head and not be disturbed by what they play in the video or what the audience is doing or what the arbiter is telling you. Or whether someone is making faces or not. Especially in that minute before the game starts, I really want to get into the game, to focus and remember my preparation. Closing my eyes is a way to get out of the world.'

For a moment I thought, is he praying?
'Well, I do pray before each game, to ask the Lord for help and strength. I am not forcing him to let me win my game, I am just asking for help and clarity. When I close my eyes, I sometimes do pray, but usually it's just to clear my mind. Get into the game and forget about the world. Once the clock starts, the most important thing is to win that game. And not to think about anything else.'

And the praying before the game you may do in your room...
'Yeah, we do. Lotis and I have started this new routine, where we read a psalm or a verse from the Bible before the game. As Christians it helps us clarify our minds and become more focused. Also to remove any worries. As I said, if things are going well in your life, you don't have many problems, then in general your play over the board will become better. I've had lawsuits, I've had people criticizing me for changing federations, for turning professional or for giving up my college education, but I think this is all in the past now. That's maybe also one of the reasons why I feel more confident these days. I prove to them that chess can be a living, that I can pursue higher goals.'

The moment you became a professional coincided with your new family. They all seem to have their own role in helping you in your career.
'Yes, they all have their own roles. First of all, they are not doing it for money, they are doing it for love. They are really kind and nice people, and God-fearing. They are not here to take advantage of me, I want to make that clear. Lotis is my manager and also my mother. She travels with me to all the tournaments I go to. She manages my emails, she manages my tickets, Facebook, my clothes. So I need not worry about how to get from one place to the other. Kind of what Henrik (Carlsen) is doing for Magnus. Renato works for Delta, he's been there for 29 years. Being such a long-standing employee, we get these really good flight benefits.'

And he's a sports fanatic.
'Yeah, he is a chess fanatic. Hundreds of chess books and tons of chess boards. Really expensive chess boards. That's why Lotis is really upset whenever he buys a new one. (Laughs) He just takes one look at it and he puts it into the closet. So he can say he's got this chess board. Then he forgets about it. Actually for my birthday he bought me this really nice wooden chess board that says GM Wesley So on the side, hand-carved.'

Does he also give you psychological advice?
'That's what Lotis does for me. One thing about Lotis is that she's extremely competitive. She was an actress in the past, and she used to train horses in Australia before she moved to Minnesota many years ago. She is extremely competitive and she has instilled some of that competitiveness into me. She always makes sure that I don't give up. Sometimes in a tournament, when you suffer a painful loss, it can be really hard to bounce back. So she makes sure that I don't give up, even if all hope is lost. She gives me psychological advice before each game, which is really good, because chess is a mental sport. She is the primary person who is making me less afraid of the World Champion (smiles).

'And Abbey is the secretary. She has the only phone in the family (laughs). Yeah, I have given up on smartphones for quite a long time now, because it's annoying, with so many apps and things. Abbey has the only phone and

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HOUDINI 5

The magician is back! With the latest version of his top chess program, Houdini 5, Robert Houdart has succeeded in catapulting himself back into the inner circle of computer chess, all while managing to maintain the unique and individual character of his engine.

Its release took some time, with it now being almost three years since the appearance of its predecessor - but the wait has certainly been worth it! Houdini 5 brings a rejuvenated and reinvigorated engine to the board, weighing in at a staggering 200 Elo points stronger than Houdini 4! This represents a practically inconceivable jump in playing strength by today's standards, and one that programmer Robert Houdart was only able to achieve by implementing a range of new techniques and ideas.

A decisive factor here is the completely redesigned evaluation function, which has been retuned to better take king safety and piece play into account. Houdini's unique playing style is the result of a cunning combination of aggressive playing ideas and healthy positional and strategic understanding. What makes playing and analysing with Houdini 5 particularly exciting is the sheer plethora of ideas it comes up with – the program has all the hallmarks of unbridled creativity. Where other engines see no way to make progress, or head towards a draw, not infrequently, Houdini conjures up hidden and surprising resources!

As opposed to its predecessor, Houdini 5 is more selective when arriving at candidate moves, which enables it to reach higher search depths. This modification pays off in all stages of the game, but particularly so when it comes to the endgame. For perfect endgame play, Houdini 5 can use the Syzygy-Tablebases* (available on 4 DVDs as "Endgame Turbo 4") combined with the Nalimov Tablebases, and is thus always able to find the quickest way to mate.* Houdini 5 also uses the "lazy SMP" algorithm, meaning it is able to achieve better results on multi-processor systems than ever before. The new engine can harness the computing power of up to 128 cores simultaneously.

The preliminary release version of Houdini 5 won convincingly ahead of all other top programs in the recent "TCEC Season 9 Rapid" tournament, scoring 56 points from 62 games (50 wins and 12 draws). The final release of Houdini 5 surpasses even this performance by another 30 Elo points, making it currently the strongest program in the world.

INCLUDED IN THE SCOPE OF SUPPLY:

- Houdini 5 Engine (Standard or Pro)
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System requirements

Minimum: Minimum: Pentium III 1 GHz, 2 GB RAM, Windows 7/8, DirectX9, graphics card with 256 MB RAM, DVD-ROM drive, Windows Media Player 9 and internet access.

Recommended: PC Intel i5 (Quadcore), 8 GB RAM, Windows 10 or 8.1, DirectX10, graphics card with 512 MB RAM or more, 100% DirectX10-compatible sound card, Windows Media Player 11, DVD-ROM drive and internet access.

* Tablebases are not included in the delivery of Houdini 5

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Lotis and I don't drive, so she drives us all over Minnesota, from the airport and back. And she minds the house. Also Lotis and Abbey have an online store where they sell antiques. Whenever we are abroad, it's always Abbey who does the packing and maintains the store.

'Of course, all of them are really supportive and they want me to reach the best of what I can be. Everyone plays a part. (Smiles) And we have two cats at home, really old cats, but they keep us happy all the time.'

Because you are always together with Lotis and you don't mingle much with other players, there are inevitably people who find this strange. They may think you don't have enough freedom to be with other players...

'(Thinks for a while) I don't really see it like that. We like all the other players here, we like most of the chess players. We have no problems with them. But at the same time, when you go to a tournament, they are your competitors. I feel it's hard to become close friends with someone you are trying to compete with. I think Magnus says the same. And I think we have some problems with trust. You know, some people are there when you are doing well, or when you're winning, but they are no longer there when you're having a bad run. We have a close group of friends, people we really trust, who are usually not competitors, we prefer to be with. But again, we like everybody here, we like all the players. It is sometimes hard to become friends with chess players. Because now you see them, but it may be a year before you see them again.'

Is this also connected to your natural parents leaving for Canada when you were 16 and leaving you behind in the Philippines? Is this why it is so important for you to trust people?

'Yes, definitely that's one of the reasons. That people you trust the most have motives themselves. (Hesitates) But, yeah, hard to explain. You know, often people say one thing, but they really mean another thing. But I don't think that's the main reason why we keep to ourselves during tournaments. When you go to a tournament, you spend most of your days playing, studying, preparing. There is really not much time to mingle. It's hard for me to socialize when I know I am going to have a game in a day or two. But now the tournament is over, the work is done, I will not mind speaking to the others at the closing dinner (laughs).

'I have given up on smartphones for quite a long time now, because it's annoying, with so many apps and things.'

And coming to London was not a holiday. I came here for business. We travel for pleasure outside tournaments. For instance, last month we went to Las Vegas for a Manny Pacquiao fight. He fought this Mexican, Jessie Vargas, and he won. We got invited, got 500 dollar seats, and I played chess with him. He sponsored a chess tournament in the Philippines before. And after each fight these boxers cannot go to sleep for eight or nine hours, because they might not wake up, so they have to stay awake for many hours (as blood clots may develop in their brain – DJtG). And he uses chess as a mental activity. He is actually not so bad. I played him two games. He doesn't really have an opening, but he plays e4 first move, and he is a very aggressive chess player, as in boxing. We played two games and after that he said "No more" (laughs).' ■

Playing chess with Manny Pacquiao, the Philippines' biggest sports star, in Las Vegas. After his successful fight with Jessie Vegas, Pacquiao needed to stay awake for 8 to 9 hours. 'He is a very aggressive chess player, as in boxing.'

Judit Polgar

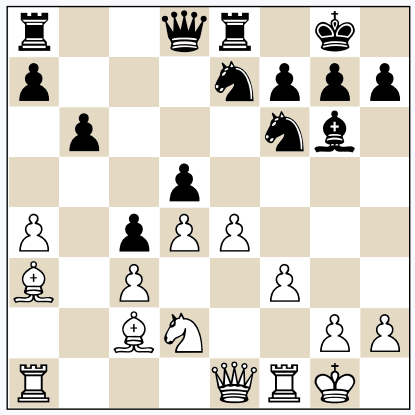
An Inspiration

Paul Keres was a giant and his legacy still shines. **JUDIT POLGAR** tells how the legendary Estonian influenced her play.

Playing abroad together with my sisters was not that simple in the beginning, because the Communist government officials were afraid that we might not return to Hungary. In 1985 my sisters travelled to the New York Open accompanied by our mom, while I had to stay at home. I used the time to study the Russian book *Keres 100 Partij* (100 Games by Keres), which had a strong impact on me.

Widely considered the strongest player who never became a world title challenger, Keres (1916-75) had a style that was both classical and dynamic. Based on solid positional factors, his active piece play was impressive, and looking back I find that I used to play in a similar way in certain parts of the game.

The first example is a brilliant illustration of how minor pieces can fight against and eventually destroy a massive pawn centre.



Tolush-Keres
Tallinn 1945
position after 17.♗a3

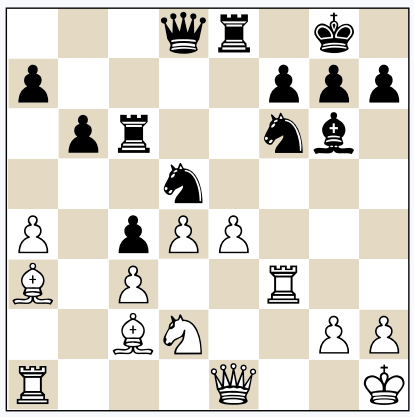
At the first glance, it seems that White has a strong initiative, partly because his a3-bishop is cutting like a blade. Keres found a dynamic way to force the bishop offside.

17...dxe4 18.fxe4 ♘ed5 Suddenly White has problems. The c3-pawn is hanging and the e4-pawn is under a double pin. **19.♖f3** Against the solid 19.♗b2 Keres intended to play 19...♕e7, increasing the pressure on e4.

19...♖c8 Calmly completing his development, and planning ...♖c6-e6. White would like to move the queen away from e1, but this would expose him to the blow ...♘xc3. Hence his next move.

Of course, 19...♘xc3? won't work because of 20.♖xc3 ♕xd4+ 21.♕e3 (Keres).

20.♔h1 ♖c6

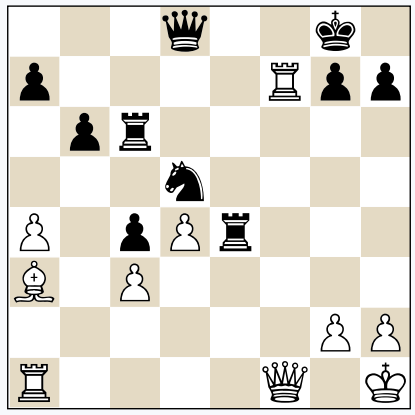


21.♕b1? Removing both pins, but losing the game.

Keres analyses the following better tries:

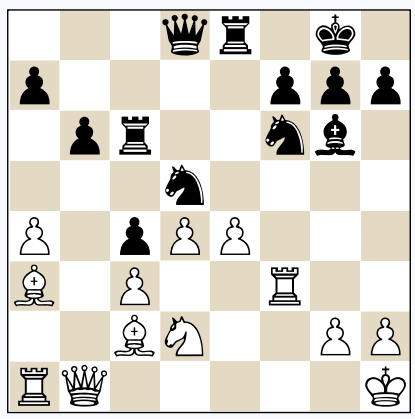
21.♕h4?! ♘xc3! 22.d5!? (22.♖xc3 ♕xd4 23.♘b1 defends the hanging pieces but 23...♗xe4 wins due to the back rank weakness) 22...♘cxd5 23.exd5 ♕xd5 24.♗xg6 hxg6, with three pawns for the bishop and a continuing attack.

21.♕f1! ♘xe4 22.♗xe4 (Keres's move order actually goes 22.♘xe4, but then Black could play 22...♖ce6! 23.♖e1 ♕d7, defending f7 and comfortably retrieving the piece) 22...♗xe4 23.♘xe4 ♖xe4 24.♖xf7



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

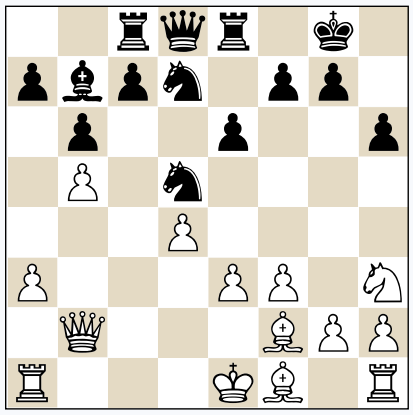
One of the few times the a3-bishop plays a part. White is threatening 25.♖f8+. 24...♖f6 25.♖xf6 ♘xf6 26.♕xc4+ ♕d5. Black's activity compensates for the missing pawn.



21...♘xc3! 22.♖xc3 ♕xd4 As pointed out by Keres, the b1-square is not available to the knight, making material losses inevitable. **23.♗b4 ♕xd2 24.a5** 24.♖xc4 ♕d7 parries all threats. **24...♗xe4** 0-1. If 25.♗xe4 ♘xe4 26.♖xc4 ♕e3, with a mating attack (Keres).

The reader may remember my knight sacrifice against Karpov in the article dedicated to pawns (New In Chess 2016/4). One month later I did it again,

on the same square and against the same opponent, keeping the similarity with Keres's game.



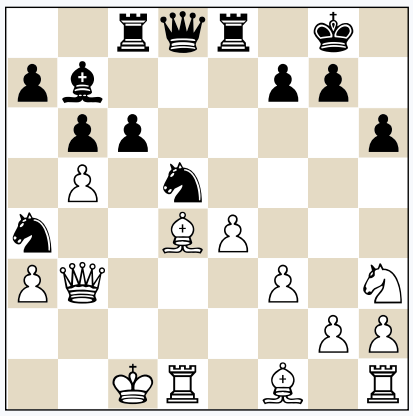
Karpov-Polgar
Hoogeveen 1999
position after 16.♕b2

White has the bishop pair and a mobile centre, but is underdeveloped. The king's presence in the centre is 'asking' for my next move:

16...e5 17.e4 exd4 18.♗xd4 ♘c5!

Increasing the pressure and creating the potential threat of ...♘xe4.

19.♗xc5 The most pragmatic decision. The immediate 19.0-0-0? leads to trouble: 19...♘a4 20.♕b3 c6!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Making the knight taboo in view of 21...cxb5+. 21.exd5 cxb5+ 22.♔b1 ♗xd5 23.♕xb5 ♗xf3! 24.gxf3 ♘c3+, with a decisive attack.

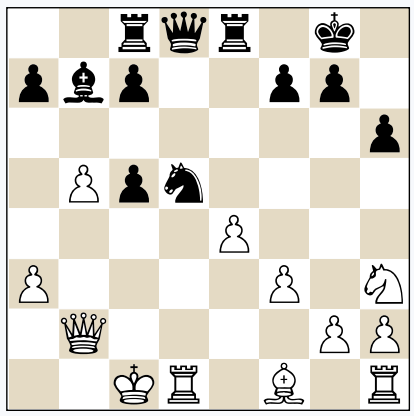
19.♗e2!? allows Black to display the main threat: 19...♘xe4! 20.fxe4 ♕h4+ 21.♘f2 ♖xe4 (threatening 22...♖ce8) 22.g3 (forcing me to continue sacrificing – 22.0-0-0 leads to a roughly equal endgame by force: 22...♕f4+ 23.♔b1 ♖xe2 24.♕xe2 ♕xd4 25.♖xd4 ♘c3+ 26.♔b2 ♘xe2, with two pawns and active play for the exchange) 22...♖xe2+! 23.♔xe2 ♕e7+ 24.♔d3

'As Fischer would say, in the Sicilian such sacrifices are as "natural as a child's smile".'

c5 (a positional move a rook down) 25.bxc6 ♖xc6 26.♖he1 ♕d7, followed by 27...♗a6+, with never-ending dangers for the white king.

19...bxc5 20.0-0-0

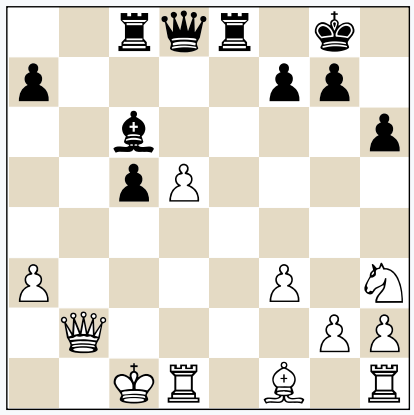
Actually, I missed this simple move that wins a piece, so unlike Keres's sacrifice, mine was unintended. But I managed to keep my cool and reacted correctly:



20...c6! 21.bxc6? Again a practical decision, but this time a bad one.

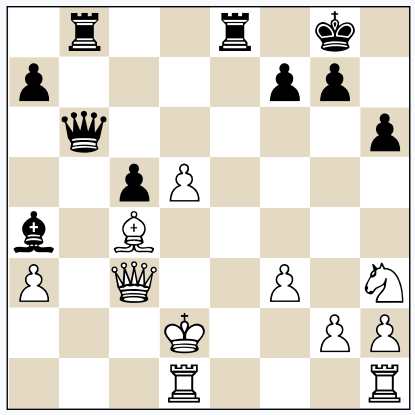
The critical continuation is 21.exd5 cxd5, with fantastic compensation due to the exposed white king and the mobile black centre. But objectively the position would be balanced.

21...♗xc6 22.exd5



I played **22...♕a5,** and after **23.dxc6 ♖b8 24.c7** the game ended in a perpetual.

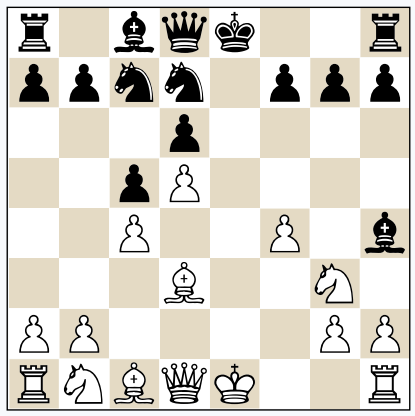
The merits of the knight sacrifice are proven by the stronger 22...♗a4!, a move I rejected on account of 23.♗c4 ♖b8 24.♕c3 ♕b6 25.♔d2.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

In fact, Black retains a devastating initiative by exchanging the queens: 25...♕b2+!! 26.♕xb2 ♖xb2+ 27.♔c1 (a sad necessity, since 27.♔d3? ♖be2! leads to mate, as does 27.♔c3? ♖c2+ 28.♔d3 ♖ce2 29.♗a6 ♖8e3+ 30.♔c4 ♖c2 mate) 27...♖c2+, and Black retrieves the piece with obvious advantage.

Despite being a classical player, Keres sometimes resorted to extravagant moves in order to keep his positional advantage.



Keres-Danielsson
Tallinn 1935
position after 10.♘g3

10...♕e7+!? Black hoped to reduce White's pressure after the 'obvious' 11.♕e2 or 11.♗e2, when 11...b5 would offer him excellent counterplay. But Keres thought differently...

11.♔d2!? Unpinning the knight and clearing the e1-square for the rook.

11...♗xg3?! Keres considered 11...0-0 impossible due to 12.♘f5, but he missed a wonderful tactical nuance: 12...♕d8!! 13.♕h5 (after 13.♘xd6 b5! the daring

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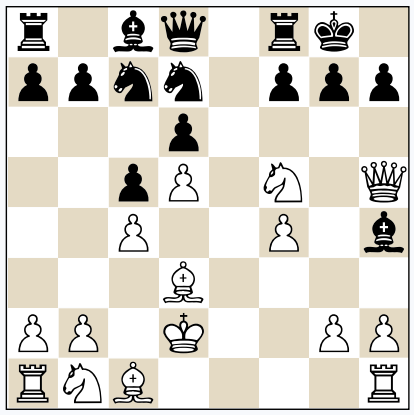
king suddenly does not feel so comfortable).



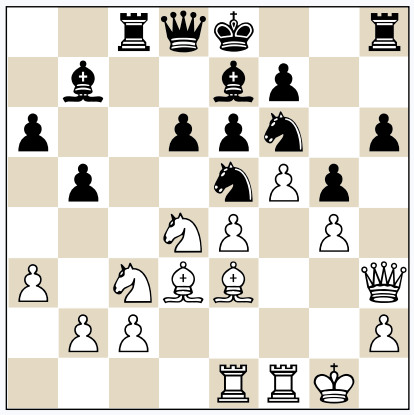
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Black seems in trouble but... 13...♘f6!! 14.♕xh4? ♗xf5 15.♗xf5 ♘e4+ wins the queen. An entirely excusable oversight by Keres.

12.hxg3 White is in complete control now, having all the needed time to complete his development.

12...♔d8 13.♖e1 ♕f8 14.b3 b5 15.♗b2 bxc4 16.bxc4 ♘b6 17.♕e2 f6 18.♘c3 ♗d7 19.g4 With a strong positional attack.

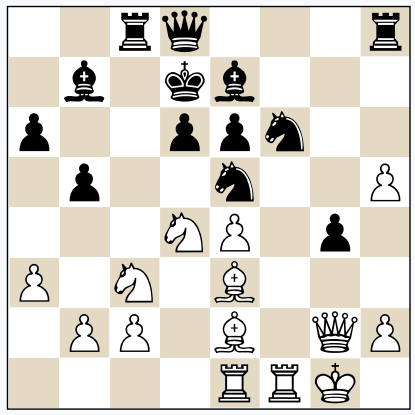
I hadn't been aware until now that Keres's original ♔e1-d2 was not entirely sound, but influenced by this game I played a similar manoeuvre in a much later game.



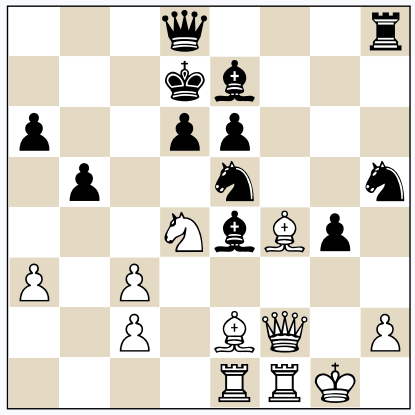
Milos-Polgar
Sao Paulo (rapid match, Game 4) 1996
position after 15.♕h3

I surely enjoyed my stability on the dark squares, ensured by my trademark ...g7-g5 a few moves earlier, but I also needed a way of parrying the threats 16.fxe6 and 16.♗xg5.

15...♔d7!! Unlike in the previous game, White's pieces are placed in such a way that they cannot threaten my king at all. Moreover, the g4-pawn is hanging. **16.♗e2 h5!** Making the most out of having connected my major pieces. **17.fxe6+ fxe6 18.gxh5** 18.♗xg5? would lead to an even worse version of the game continuation: 18...♕b6 19.♗e3 hxg4 20.♕g3 ♖xc3 21.bxc3 ♘xe4, and wins. **18...g4 19.♕g2**



19...♖xc3 As Fischer would say, in the Sicilian such sacrifices are as 'natural as a child's smile'. **20.bxc3 ♗xe4 21.♕f2 ♘xh5** With a pawn for the exchange, the better structure and dangerous kingside threats, my advantage is indisputable. **22.♗f4** The attempt to molest my king with 22.♘xe6 is best met by 22...g3 23.hxg3 (on 23.♘xd8, 23...gxf2+ wins a piece) 23...♘f4!? (not the only winning knight jump) 24.♕xf4 (clearing the f2-square does not change much) 24...♖h1+ 25.♔f2 ♖h2+ 26.♔g1 ♖g2+, and wins.



22...g3! A familiar pattern. **23.hxg3** 23.♗xg3 ♘xg3 24.♕xg3 ♖g8 is just as bad for White. **23...♘xf4 24.♕xf4 ♖h1+ 25.♔f2 ♖h2+ 26.♔e3 ♗g5** And my opponent resigned a few moves later. ■

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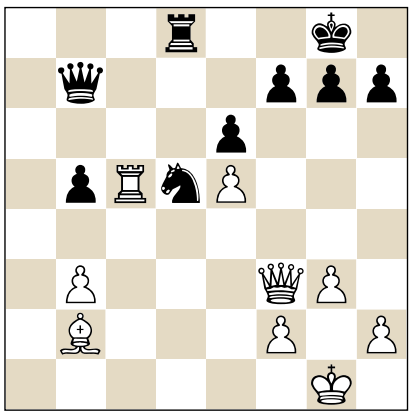
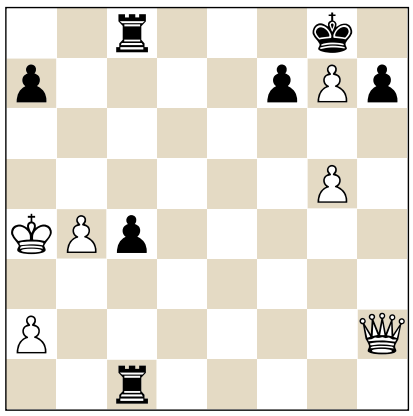
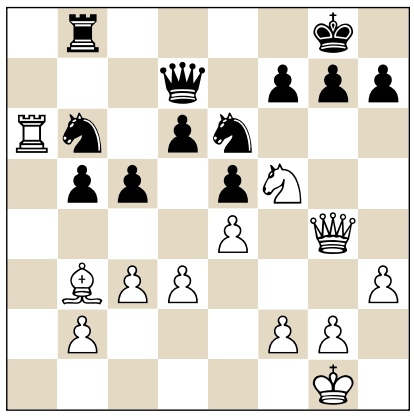
Solutions on page 105



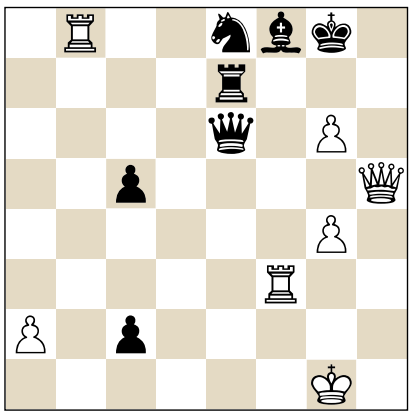
1. Black to play



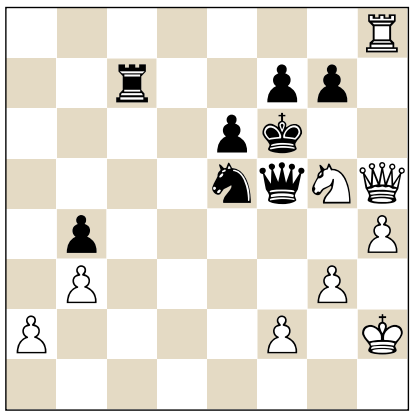
2. White to play



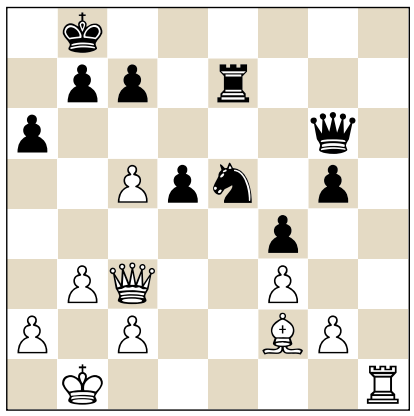
3. White to play



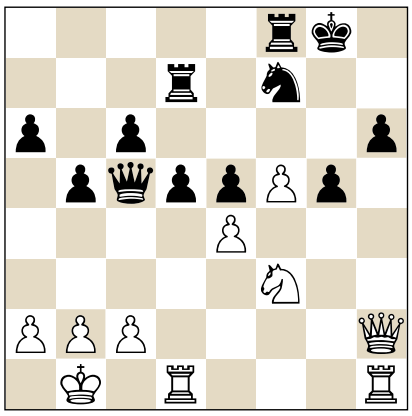
4. White to play



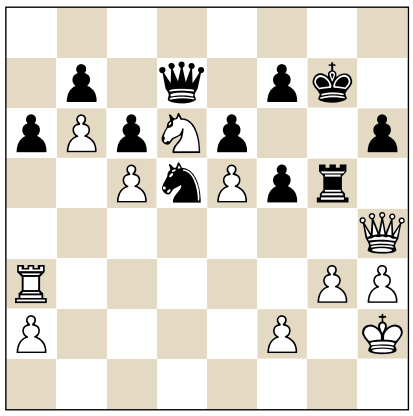
5. White to play



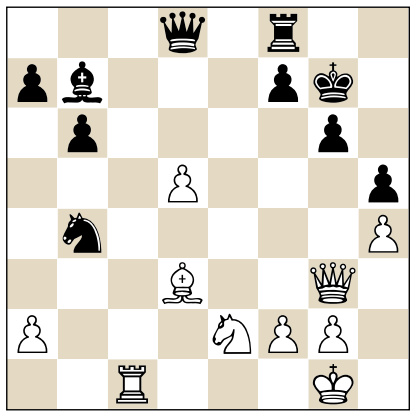
6. White to play



7. White to play



8. White to play

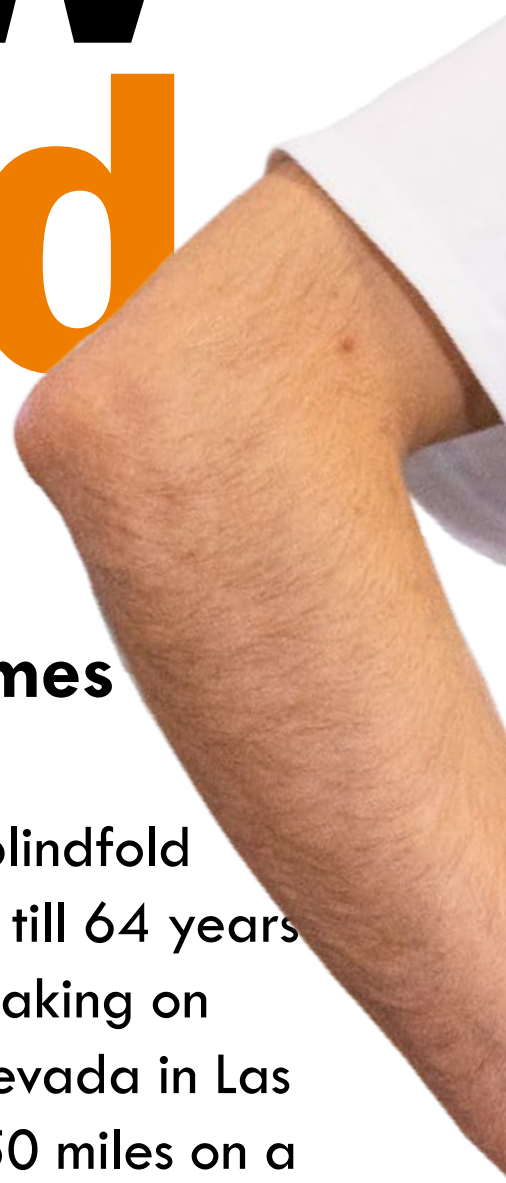


9. White to play

TIMUR GAREYEV

The New Blindfold King

Timur Gareyev takes world record to 48 games



The legendary Miguel Najdorf stunned the world with a blindfold simul against 45 opponents in Sao Paulo in 1947. It wasn't till 64 years later, in 2011, that Marc Lang broke this world record by taking on 46 players. On December 4, 2016, at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, Timur Gareyev erected a new touchstone. Riding 50 miles on a spin bike, the American grandmaster successfully completed 48 games in 18.5 hours without sight of the board. Here's his mind-boggling story, written by **TIMUR GAREYEV** himself with the help of his friend and collaborator Jennifer Vallens.

LENNART OOTES

'What I discovered was that the steady movement of the bike made such a difference in my focus and flow of blindfold chess.'

There is a famous quote from the French painter Paul Gauguin, 'I close my eyes so I can see'. When I play blindfold chess, I do just that... close my eyes and see. I don't just see pieces on a chessboard though, I see 48 different works of art. Each game painted with a different brush stroke.

My fascination with blindfold chess started around 2011, when I played my first blindfold chess game, a game played without the sight of the board or pieces. The simple act of blindfold chess is not so difficult for the skilled chess player. Ask any IM or GM to go over a game that he just played and he can recount the moves without looking at the board. Blindfold chess is like that. At my level, most games played with a lower strength player have a predictable pattern to them. But once you add additional games played at the same time, keeping track and recalling each individual game becomes much more challenging.

I enjoyed this mental challenge and started increasing the number of boards that I could play. The challenge with blindfold chess is less on strategy, as it would be in a competitive game with a player of similar strength, and more on the exercise of visualizing through imagery. When I started increasing the games over 10 or 15 boards, the added challenge of endurance captivated me. I did several exhibitions in 2013, most notably a 27-board blindfold simul in Hawaii and 33 boards in St. Louis.

I found the challenge of perfecting the art of blindfold chess thrilling and I began dreaming about breaking the world record. But it wasn't until I met Jennifer Vallens in 2014 that a real plan came in focus. She saw the beauty and significance in what I was set to accomplish. Together we developed a common vision to share the art of blindfold chess with the world and the 'blindfold king' was born.

Relieving a little stress before the simul starts kicking a ball.

Asking the participants what they had for breakfast.

PHOTOS: LENNART OOTES

Over the next two years, I mastered my craft as I travelled on my blindfold chess tour. Some of my most memorable events have included playing 35 boards blindfolded in California, breaking a world record for Tandem blindfold chess with Blindfold Chess Champion Marc Lang in Germany, and setting a new world record for rapid blindfold Consecutive Games in Iowa.

My training not only consisted of playing blindfold chess, but I needed to work on my endurance and memory as well. This past year, I ran a couple of marathons and even went on a 3,000-mile weeklong ride on a motorcycle. I began practicing yoga daily, implemented a vegan diet and I also started working with a memory expert who helped me develop memory techniques.

‘I began practicing yoga daily, implemented a vegan diet and I also started working with a memory expert who helped me develop memory techniques.’

Just for kicks

It was during this tour when I came up with the idea of pairing bike riding with playing blindfold chess. We were in Ft. Collins, Colorado, at an elementary school. I hopped on a stationary bike in the gym during a break of preparation for the blindfold chess the next day. As I pedaled the bike, I decided, just for kicks, that I would experiment with riding the bike during the event. What I discovered was that the steady movement of the bike made such a difference in my focus and flow of blindfold chess. Now I try to always incorporate some form of exercise into my blindfold chess play.

This blindfold chess journey was not without its trials. Jennifer did everything she could to promote blindfold chess and find sponsors. We were looking for a host who could finance the event and find a location that could accommodate a 24-hour event with 50 or so players who would commit to that timeframe. There were talks with the Chicago chapter of Mensa, the Prague Chess Society and the Stockholm Chess Federation, but at the end of the day there were always obstacles that frustrated our ambitions.

In the end we decided to bring the event back to the US. My goal was set for 2016. With no sponsorship in sight and the end of the year approaching, our options were looking bleak. But Jennifer and I decided to forge ahead and organize the event ourselves.

We had two months to pull it together. Jennifer started a crowdfunding campaign and reached out to family and friends. We were able to raise 28% of our goal, not nearly enough to subsidize our event. But we continued.

We settled on Las Vegas as the venue because we had so many supportive friends there, and it is a town that never sleeps. We searched high and low for an appropriate location. December 3 was a prime holiday date and hotels and other venues were booking up fast and charging premium rates. We contacted our good friends Juan and Sabrina of the Las Vegas Chess Center to see if they would work with us to plan this event. They enthusiastically agreed. This was the start of building

And pedalling and making moves… until raw-food master Joe caused a half-hour interruption by setting off the fire alarm with his sausages.

a dream team for the event. We invited Lennart Ootes to help with our technology and be our photographer and we asked Jay Stallings to help out with commentary. Both, without hesitation, volunteered their time to support us. Through the Las Vegas Chess Center, I met Keith and Ryan Ray of Killer Dutch Productions. They were eager to get involved and went full throttle, securing 7 cameras and state-of-the-art lighting and sound. We stumbled upon the Foundations Room at UNLV as a potential for the location. When that was secured, it was all coming together beyond our wildest dreams.

Cryotherapy

Jennifer took the role of party planner and took measures to ensure that all participants would feel like they were breaking the world record too. We knew this would be a long day for everyone involved with one move possibly taking up to 45 minutes before the next move could be played. We set up a meet and greet the night before so that we could all feel comfortable and get to know each other.

The Foundations Room was a perfect venue. We had outdoor space and had borrowed two spin bikes for players to ride between rounds. The room was equipped with wifi and all our technology needs could be satisfied.

My ideal situation would have included a month to prepare physically and mentally. I would have spent the time hiking, doing yoga, meditation and cryotherapy (a form of therapy where you get into a chamber that is set to subzero temperatures for 3 minutes. The shock of the temperatures promote health). I would do all the things that would put me in a spiritual and mental place befitting the magnitude of the task at hand. But as it turned out, without the financing, we had to work together to get the details in order.

I rented a house to share with my mother who came from Kansas and my father who came out from Kazan, Russia, to support me. We housed a few friends as well.

Finding the right spin bike was crucial to my success. When I started doing blindfold events early on, I found that I needed absolute quiet. Small whispers were extremely distracting and took away my mental energy. But since incorporating a spin bike in my performance, I found that I am more engaged and able to interact and talk with the players, and small noises no longer have the same effect on me.

But finding a bike sponsor proved to be equally challenging. We spent hours trying out different bikes to make sure I had the right one. A friend of mine had a connection at the gym at Las Vegas airport who said they would loan us a bike. We had one already from UNLV, but I needed to know I had the best. It was comical to see Jennifer and me buzzing around the airport looking for the gym. Once we found it, we were told we could take two bikes. Here we were dragging spin bikes through baggage claim, down the elevator, outside through airport pick-up and finally to the parking. There we jammed the two bikes in her minivan and off we went just an hour before set-up for the event and meeting the players.

It turned out, with the help of the Las Vegas Chess Center, we were able to secure all 48 of our players. Most were club members and good friends of mine. Participants came out from California, Colorado and as far as Missouri and Tennessee. We had 48 games set up in two rows. Boards 44-48 were not played over the board, but online with participants from Brazil, Sweden and the US. The average rating of the players was 1700. The participant from Brazil was 92-year-old Luciano Nilo de

Blindfold World Record

It is not easy to find out what exact requirements a successful blindfold simultaneous world record should meet, as there are no generally accepted rules. Or rather, there are more or less generally accepted rules, but there are different opinions on all kinds of detail. For instance, Timur Gareyev heard his opponents say their moves, but there are purists who find that the moves should be transferred by a neutral teller. Or, a probably more important issue, what should be the average level of the opposition? When we asked Jennifer Vallens what the average rating of 1700 was based on, she replied that this was based on the USCF ratings that they could verify. Of these players the highest-rated one was 2200, the lowest 895. Six players were rated 1900 or above. But six players had no ratings. In the history of blindfold chess the lack of clarity or agreement about the rules has led to many disputes, as can be read in the wonderful book Blindfold Chess (McFarland) by blindfold authorities Eliot Hearst and John Knott. There are no FIDE rules for such records and there is no governing body for blindfold chess. Timur Gareyev and Jennifer Vallens have sent all the details to The Guinness Book of World Records (who, by the way, don't acknowledge Miguel Najdorf's record, because he allegedly had access to the scoresheets – most experts don't share this view) and are confident that his simul will meet their rules 'with no problem'. But this verification takes time and hopefully we can inform you of their decision in a next issue (DJtG).

Andrade, the only surviving participant from Najdorf's 1947 record simul!

At the meet and greet, it was helpful to see the set-up and imagine the players seated at their boards. Talking with the players also helped me to experience their personalities, voices and styles. Knowing the players prior certainly helped distinguish the opening systems on different boards, which tends to be the toughest part.

We set up the boards in a double u-shaped arc. We placed the name cards with rating level at each board. I was able to visualize the players at the boards and later watched a digital video of the name cards. This helped me prepare for the task.

'I am alcoholic'

On the morning of December 3, people started arriving at 7 a.m. The games were to start at 8 a.m. While the players were registered, I relieved a little stress playing soccer.

Once each player was seated, I went around the room having each of them say their name and their rating.

'The participant from Brazil was 92-year-old Luciano Nilo de Andrade, the only surviving participant from Najdorf's 1947 record simul!'

Players were encouraged to share what they had eaten for breakfast or anything they wanted to include in their introduction. This was a great ice breaker, but also helped with my memory associations. When I came to Robert Giordano's board and his turn came up to introduce himself, he joked 'Hello, my name is Robert and I am alcoholic'. The crowd burst out in laughter and the whimsical tone was set for the day.

After shaking everyone's hand, I took one last mental picture of the room. I swung my leg over to step up on my bike and slipped my blindfold over my head, swiping my sight for total blackness. Before I could start my first game, I needed to get my head in the right space. I ignited my ujjayi breath. In yoga, that is referred to as the victorious breath of fire. I inhaled deeply through my nose, taking in enough oxygen and holding it in for a count of 5, and slowly I exhaled also through my nose for another count of 5. I did this a few times. This rhythmic breathing helps me stay present, self-aware and grounded. With that, I began 'Board 1'.

Everything was progressing as it should. The mood remained light. The players were able to get up from their seats and grab a bite to eat, walk around to watch the other games and take turns being interviewed in the back for the live stream broadcast. Wearing an actual blindfold had been more of a prop in my first years, but now as I put on the blindfold, it transforms me and I am better able to focus and recreate the positions in my mind.

In previous events, players have quit due to endurance challenges and I have actually encouraged players to take back their poor moves and look for better ones. But this event was different, all the players were engaged and on their game. They were up for the task and as motivated to see it through as I was.

Using all your senses

I would announce my move by saying the board number and then calling out my move. We had a teller work in 3-4 hour shifts. The teller held a microphone. In the initial rounds I would ask each player to say their name before calling out their moves. When each player would say his/her name, it would often trigger the board position to pop up in my mind. The image is not necessarily a board position per se, but rather a recall of the game. With blindfold chess, it is not photographic memory that allows me to play, but rather the meditative

World Record Blindfold Chess		
		boards
1919	Richard Réti	24
1921	Gyula Breyer	25
1924	Alexander Alekhine	26
1925	Alexander Alekhine	28
1925	Richard Réti	29
1931	George Koltanowski	30
1933	Alexander Alekhine	32
1937	George Koltanowski	34
1943	Miguel Najdorf	40
1947	Miguel Najdorf	45
2011	Marc Lang	46
2016	Timur Gareyev	48

source: *Blindfold Chess* by Eliot Hearst and John Knott

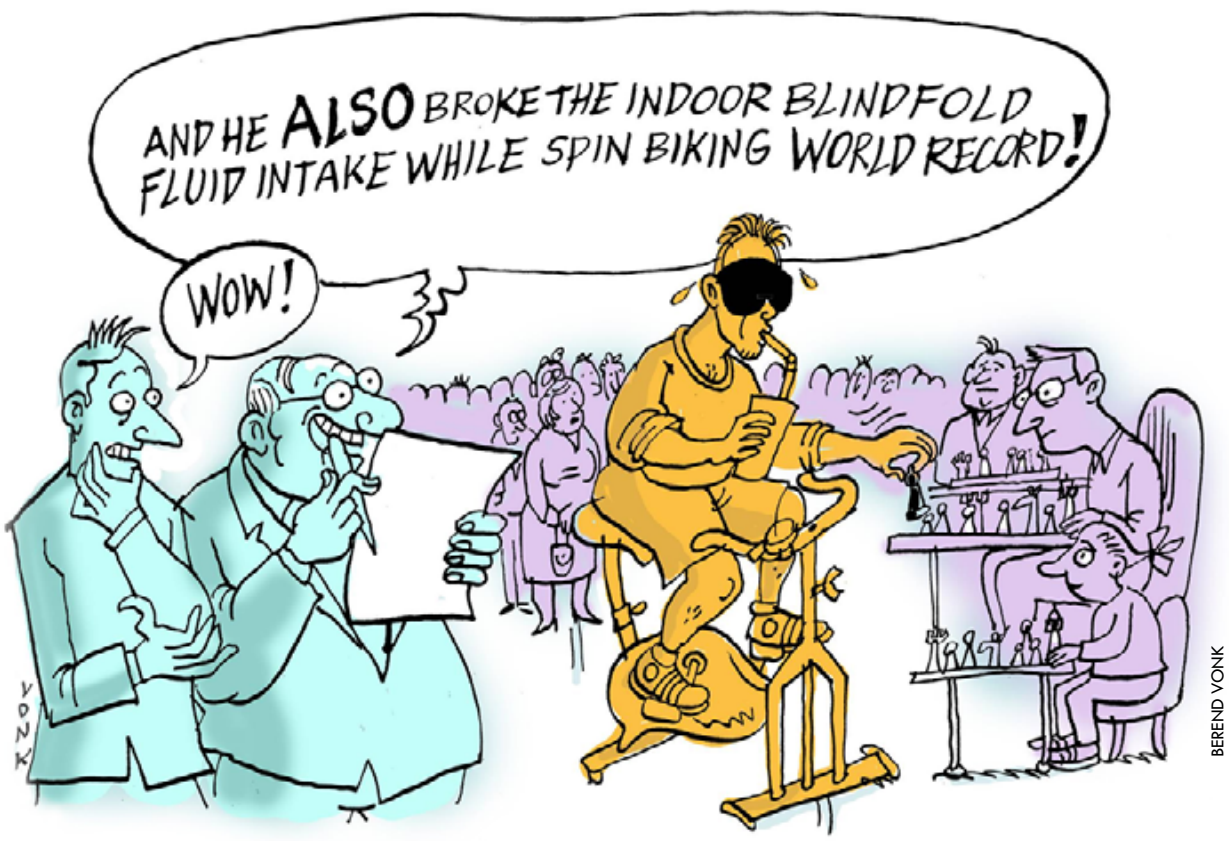
abilty to imagine and associate. This ability truly feels like the 'art of blindfold chess'.

I feel that in order to truly engage your memory, the best method combines using all of your senses. I think that perceiving the board as a whole, similar to how you would scan a page or paragraph in the methods of speed-reading, works best.

As I flowed from one game to the next, I was able to sustain my energy by foods and drinks. Eating solid foods requires a lot of work to digest, so I stuck with liquids. Sustaining this high level of cognitive function without coffee, sodas and traditional energy drinks was a top priority. My friend from Colorado, Joe of Joe's Magic Foods, provided me with a steady flow of raw drinking chocolate for natural caffeine and fresh squeezed organic apple juice to keep my blood sugar in check. Since I was blindfolded, every time Joe brought me a new food, I was surprised with an unexpected flavour. Watermelon marinated in lemon juice was refreshing and acted like both a stimulant of melon sugars and enzymes with a zing of lemon. I was unprepared for the taste of pickled Serrano peppers, but they provided a welcome jolt of energy. Joe made smoothies made up of tons of brain boosting ingredients like avocados, beets, coconut oil and green leafy vegetables.

I took a few breaks, 8 to be exact, for about 10 minutes each. These breaks were basically my only chance to stretch out my legs and use the restroom.

After about two and a half hours in and despite all the cool action on Board 1, the first fireworks were going off on Board 4 in my game with Tom Brownscombe.

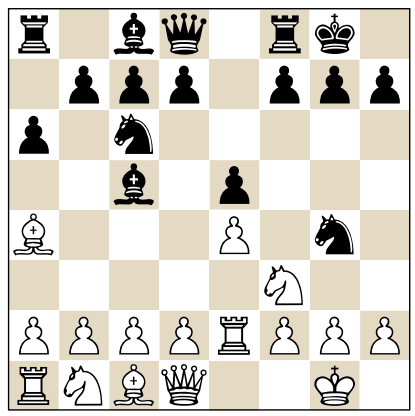


BEREND VONK

NOTES BY
Timur Gareyev

Tom Brownscombe (2149)
Timur Gareyev
Blindfold World Record 2016
Ruy Lopez, Møller Defence

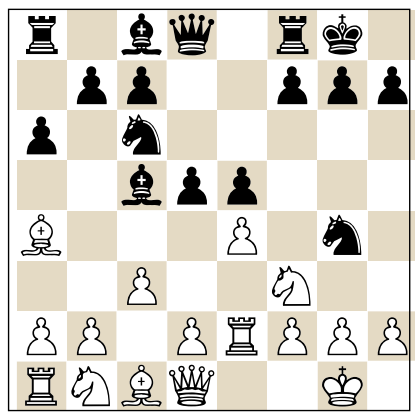
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗c5 6.♖e1 ♘g4!? 7.♖e2 0-0



8.c3

After 8.h3 f5!, all of a sudden Black's intentions unfold. Now 9.hxg4? gives Black too much play: 9...fxg4 10.♘xe5 g3 11.d4 ♗xd4 with a crushing attack. On 9.d3 Black has 9...d5!? 10.♗g5 ♕d6 11.♘c3 fxe4 12.dxe4 ♘d4!, with attack.

8...d5!



9.exd5?

This is a big mistake from which White can no longer recover.

Necessary was 9.d4 exd4 10.exd5 (after 10.cxd4? ♘xd4! 11.♘xd4 dxe4 12.♖xe4 ♕h4 White cannot successfully cope with Black's initiative) 10...♕xd5 11.♗xc6 ♕xc6 12.cxd4 and White is OK.

9...e4!

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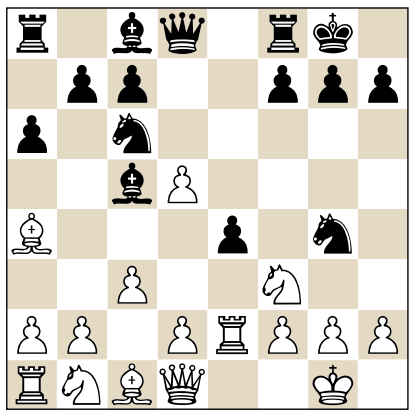
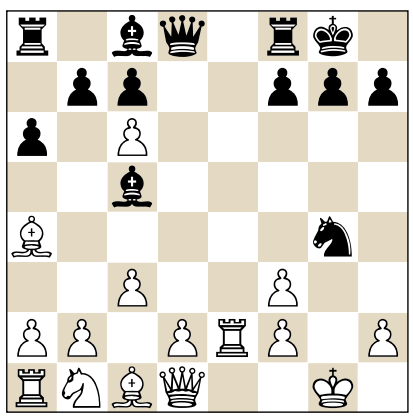


A killer shot that my opponent missed in his analysis!

10.dxc6 10.♘g5 hits on 10...♕d6! 11.g3 ♕xd5 12.♘xe4 ♘xh2! 13.♗xc6 (13.♔xh2 ♕h5+ 14.♔g1 ♗g4 winning) 13...bxc6 14.d4 ♗g4 and Black wins. **10...exf3 11.gxf3**



11...♘xh2! Black's attack now develops in one breath.

12.♖e5 ♕f6! 13.♖xc5 ♘xf3+ 14.♔g2 ♗h3+! 15.♔xh3 ♕h4+ 16.♔g2 ♕g4+ 17.♔f1 ♘h2+ 18.♔e1 ♖fe8+ White resigned.

Now speaking of fire, three hours into the simul we had a fire in the kitchen! Or at least that's what the police and firemen thought as the fire alarm went off. The piercing alarm rang in my ears and would not stop going off as everyone had to evacuate. I was led outside and had to keep from letting my mind wander and worry about how this unforeseen circumstance could set us back in time. I instead implemented my victorious breathing and enjoyed the kiss of the warm sun on my face.

As we found out, it was Joe who was using his portable cooker to make sausages for participants that set off the smoke sensor. Thirty minutes after the incident happened, everyone returned to their places and we picked up right where we left off.

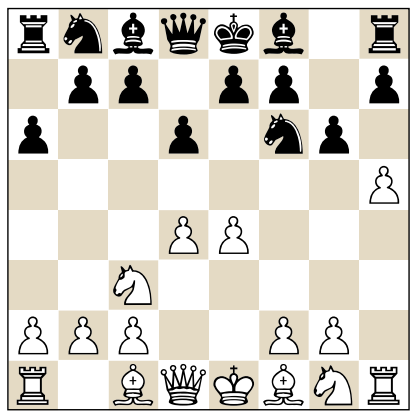
As I mentioned the 'cool action' on Board 1, I might as well show you that game too.

Timur Gareyev
David Dashoff
Blindfold World Record 2016
Pirc Defence

1.d4 d6 2.e4 g6 3.h4

This is the kind of move everyone wants to play but somehow feels shy to pull the trigger. Kind of like guests at a party waiting to have their first cocktail before starting to mingle. Well, we are not the kind that will postpone all the fun until the next great game, so let's get the party started now!

3...♘f6 4.♘c3 a6 5.h5!



Leading up to the idea to make this game crazy enough to make it worth our attention.

5...♘xh5 6.♖xh5!?

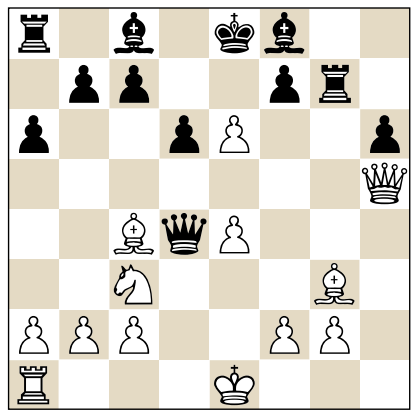
6.g4 is also a worthwhile approach, for example 6...♘f6 7.g5 ♘fd7 8.♗e3.

6...gxh5 7.♕xh5 h6 8.♘f3 ♖g8 9.♗c4 e6 10.♗f4 ♕f6 After 10...♖xg2 11.♗g3 ♕f6 12.0-0-0 ♕g6 13.♕h3, Black is definitely in a position to give the exchange back and keep an extra pawn.

11.♗g3 ♘c6 12.d5 ♘d4?

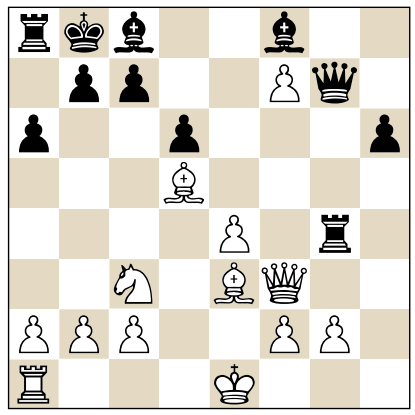
The beauty of an aggressive strategy and applying constant pressure, is that your opponent has many more opportunities to make a mistake!

13.♘xd4 ♕xd4 14.dxe6 ♖g7



15.exf7+ White could also withdraw the bishop, 15.♗b3, with a winning advantage.

15...♔d7 16.♕f5+ ♔c6 17.♗d5+ ♔b6 18.♕f4 ♖g4 19.♕f3 ♔a7 20.♗f4 ♔b8 21.♗e3 ♕g7



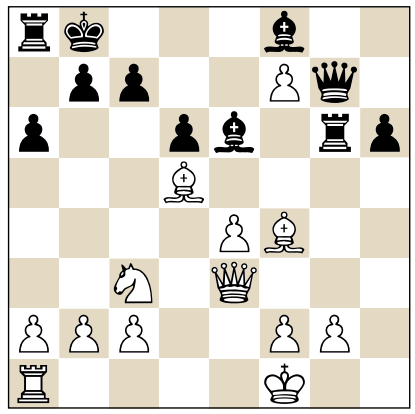
Ironically, I have gone through the motions of chasing Black's king into safety.

22.♔f1?! Instead, 22.0-0-0 was more natural. For example, 22...♖xg2 23.e5 ♖g1 24.e6 winning.

22...♖g6 23.♗f4

23.♗b3 was better: 23...♗e6 24.♗xe6 ♖xe6 25.♘d5 ♕xb2 26.♖e1 with a clear advantage for White.

23...♗g4 24.♕e3 ♗e6

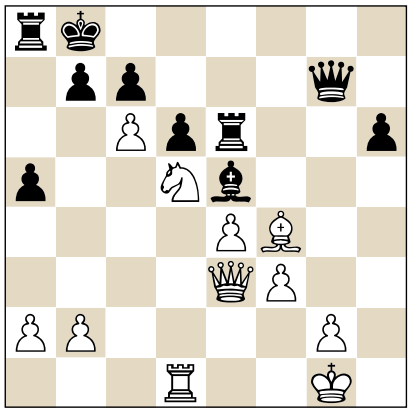


Now Black gets the f7-pawn.

MARIUS LUCAN

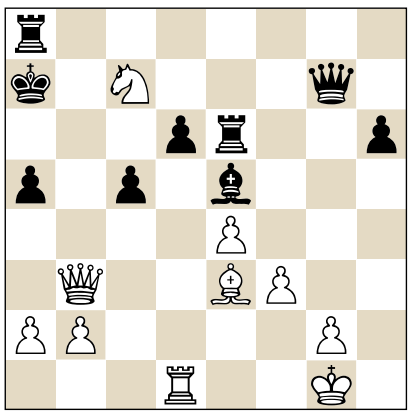
The cool action on Board 1 in the game with David Dashoff ended with a nice combination.

25.♗xe6 ♖xe6 26.♘d5 ♕xf7 27.♖d1 ♗g7 28.♔g1 ♕g6 29.f3 a5 30.c4 ♗e5 31.c5 ♕g7 32.c6



I have managed to consolidate my game and now execute the attacking plan.

32...bxc6 33.♕b3+ ♔a7 34.♗e3+ c5 35.♘xc7



35...♕g3?? And David lost his cool. Instead, 35...♖g8 was the proper way to seek counterplay, when 36.♘b5+ ♔a6 37.♘c7+ is an interesting repetition of moves.

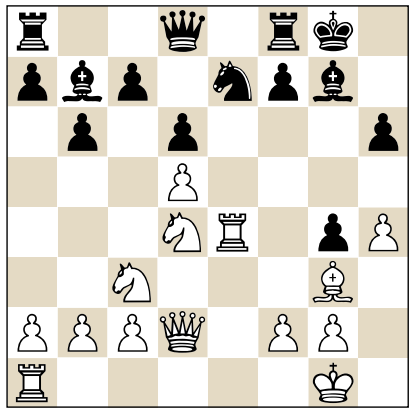
36.♗xc5+! Now I execute the combination that I trusted I had calculated well.

36...dxc5 37.♘b5+ ♔a6 38.♕xe6+ ♔xb5 39.a4+ ♔b4 As 39...♔xa4 40.♕c4 is mate.

40.♕b6+ ♔c4 41.♕b5 Mate.

A second unexpected break took place around 2 p.m. As I was blasting through the games entering tough middlegame action, one of the participants, Marius Lucan, got concerned about a wired device I was wearing. I was not sure what was happening, but I was asked to take a break asap and was escorted outside. The technicians explained that I was using a wireless microphone and that the device on my back was a transmitter, the same that the commentator was using. With Marius as a witness, the wireless mic was removed. To remove all suspicions I refused to wear the wireless mic any longer and continued with an overhead mic. Lucan went on to win his game and when interviewed on the livestream he said that he was convinced that no cheating had been going on and went on to say that this was the best day of his life.

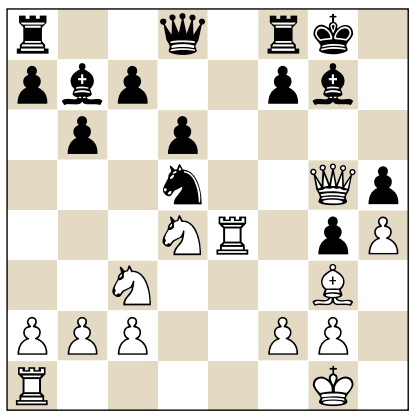
Timur Gareyev
Marius Lucan (1834)
Blindfold World Record 2016



16...h5 17.♕g5?

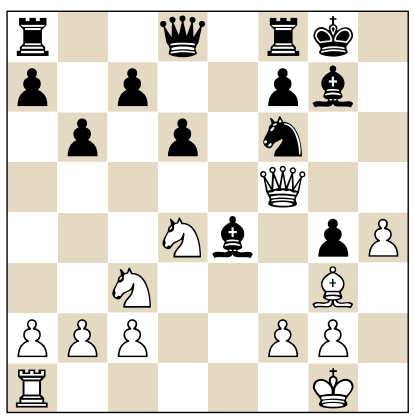
Missing an important tactical shot. 17.♖ae1! instead, was giving White a winning advantage: 17...♘xd5 (less catastrophic is 17...♗xd4 although it's clear who is calling the shots after 18.♖xd4 ♘f5 19.♖f4 ♘g7 20.♖fe4) 18.♘xd5 ♗xd5 19.♖e7! (with the big threats of ♘f5 and ♕g5) 19...♗f6 (or 19...♗e6 20.♖1xe6 fxe6 21.♖xg7+ winning) 20.♘f5 ♗e6 21.♕h6 and Black will suffer a mating attack.

17...♘xd5!



Now I am in trouble and must calculate a way to keep myself in the game.

18.♕xh5 ♘f6 19.♕f5 ♗xe4



Once his suspicions were dispelled, Marius Lucan called the experience 'the best day of his life'.

My opponent reversed the move order in an effort to confuse me and it worked!
20.♕xe4?? This sure is not a sacrifice. As I assessed the bishop capture on e4, I assumed that the knights had gotten traded already. Over and over again I realize how important it is to stay in the moment when playing blindfold chess!
That said, after 20.♘xe4 ♘xe4 21.♕xe4 ♗xd4 22.♕xd4 f5 White does not have sufficient compensation to hold the game in balance.
20...♘xe4 White resigned.

Fatigue set in around midnight, around the 16-hour mark. I don't know how Lennart was able to keep up with the never-ending task of entering all the moves. He was my quality control, making sure all moves were legal and entered correctly. He singlehandedly entered over 2700 moves played and recorded manually!

Despite lack of sleep, an imperfect memory system, and unexpected higher strength of the majority of the players, I trusted that my human mind wouldn't settle for anything beyond brilliant. I've read that the subconscious handles 90% of our daily thought processes and actions. Just like stepping up to the chess table and instantly noticing the best opportunity virtually with no conscious thought, I trusted flowing from one board to the next, connecting with the memory anchors. I used a combination of animal and fruit associations in my mind. It also helped to play alternate colours to vary up the games and keep them distinct.

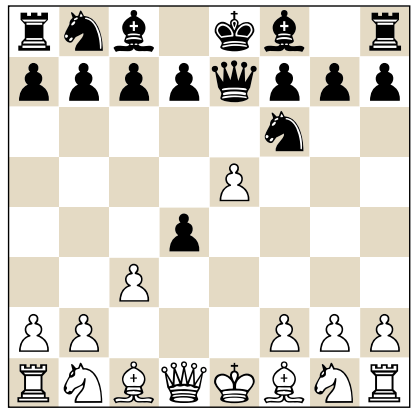
For example, considering you may have a sequence of several openings such as 1.d4-d5, 1.e4-e5, 1.c4-e5. You may choose the image of Princess Diana for the Queen's Gambit, Elvis Presley for 1.e4-e5, and an Englishman drinking a cup of tea for the English Opening. Now the key is to anchor those characters along the journey through your memory palace. As the games evolve you may elaborate on more ways to distinguish and transform the images to aid your memory.

The challenges are definitely in the opening of the games. But as I reach the 'state of flow', visualizing becomes effortless and turns into awareness. It becomes easier to see and execute as the game goes on. The positions become more distinct.

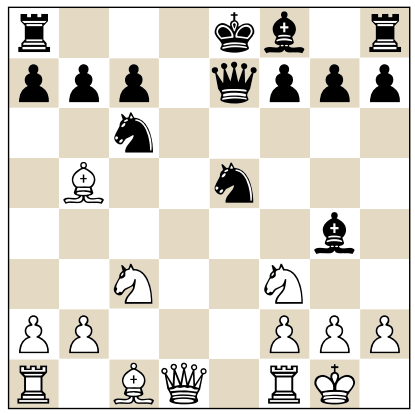
Here is a game in which I lost track in the opening. But that did not stop me from tricking my young opponent a bit later with 'an offer he could not refuse'.

Timur Gareyev
Wu Shenmein
Blindfold World Record 2016
King's Pawn, Centre Game

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 ♘f6
Here I briefly lost track of the opening position. Fortunately, I was able to recover quickly: 'Oh that's the Dutch Gambit game number 36' (It's actually not the Dutch but the Danish Gambit – ed.).
4.e5 ♕e7



Certainly a risky way to handle the opening since the queen will be blocking the dark-squared bishop.
5.cxd4 d6 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗b5 ♗g4 8.0-0 dxe5 9.dxe5 ♘d7 10.♘c3 ♘dxe5



My opponent bites! (You may want to have a look at his smile in the accompanying picture ☺)

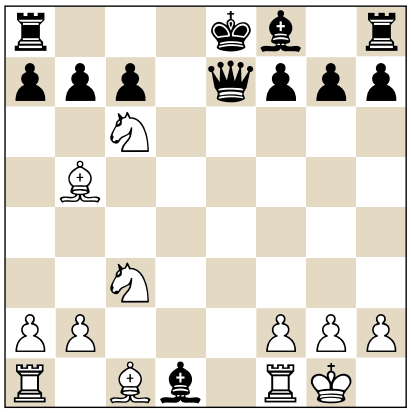
LENNART OOTES

Wu Shenmein: Really, can I take your queen?

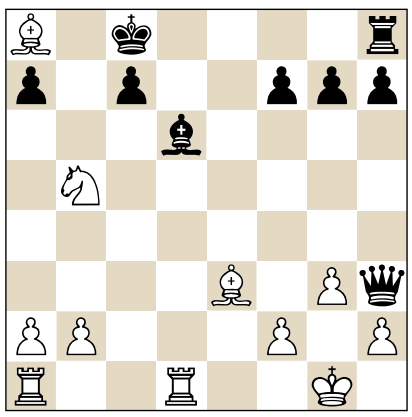
LENNART OOTES

After 18.5 hours the blindfold comes off and it's time to rejoice with Jennifer Vallens.

11.♘xe5! ♗xd1 12.♘xc6 12...bxc6 13.♗xc6+ ♔d8 14.♖xd1+ ♔c8 15.♗xa8 ♕h4 16.g3 ♕h3 17.♗e3 ♗d6 18.♘b5



It is not so easy for Black, since I am picking up more than enough material. Plus Black's king gets exposed, and my opponent lacks any development.



And here Black realized the tough nature of his position and resigned.

I like focusing on my breath, and calmness of mind is certainly the key to greater focus. 'Blindfold chess meditation' comes from a place of oneness with the experience. Instead of isolating and handling each board as an outcome, or an enemy to be destroyed, the whole 'circle' of 48 games is experienced as one flow process of effortless decision-making. Anything less than that, and you're burning your engine trying to go 45 miles an hour in 1st gear.

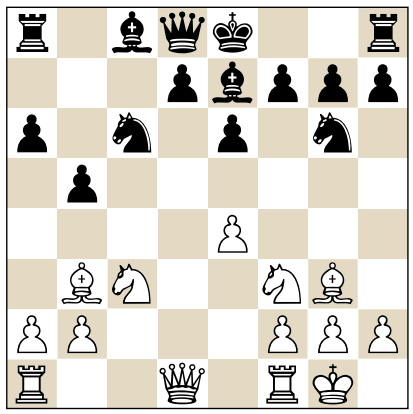
I was told the last game concluded at 3.38 a.m. As I peeled off the blindfold, I was understandably disoriented. It was difficult to gain my equilibrium. I felt like I was in a dream state. But the primary feeling I had was relief. I had just fulfilled my dream. I broke the world record for blindfold chess. I played 48 games in 18.5 hours and rode about 50 miles on a bike. I won 35 games, drew 7 and lost only 6. My overall percentage of wins 80.2%. And you know what, I'm ready to do it again! Anyone interested in sponsoring a 55 board world record event?

But first, I will show you one more game from the simul in Vegas.

Timur Gareyev
Scottson White
Blindfold World Record 2016
Sicilian, Smith-Morra Gambit

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.♗c4 ♘c6 5.♘f3 e6 6.♘xc3 a6

7.♗f4 ♘ge7 8.0-0 ♘g6 9.♗g3 b5 10.♗b3 ♗e7



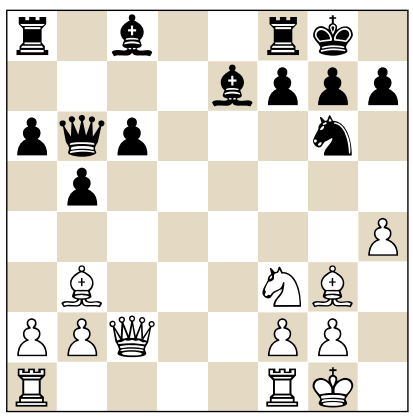
Now that I've completed my development, the question is how do I get through!?

11.♘d5!? exd5 12.exd5 0-0!?

A practical solution by Black to get the king out of the way while still retaining an extra pawn.

After 12...♘a5 13.d6 ♗f6 14.♕d5 ♘xb3 15.♖ae1+ ♔f8 16.♕xa8, despite the computer's verdict of equality, Black's position looks very tough.

13.dxc6 dxc6 14.♕c2 ♕b6 15.h4!?



I like this idea and it worked well in the game.

15...c5?!

15...♗g4 was necessary: 16.♘h2 ♗h5 17.♕f5 ♕c5 and Black retains an edge.

16.♗d5 ♗b7 17.♗xb7 ♕xb7 18.h5 ♘h8

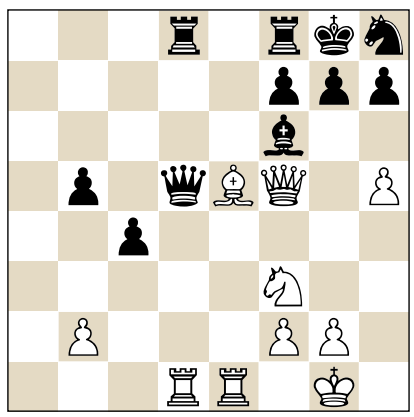
Now Black may activate the knight only at the expense of weakening the kingside structure.

19.♖fe1 ♖ad8 20.a4 c4 21.axb5 axb5 22.♕f5 ♗f6 23.♗e5 ♕d5 24.♖ad1

24.♖a6!? was an interesting idea.

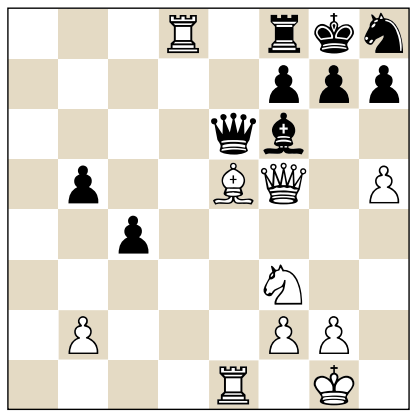
LENNART OOTES

And as always, it's your mother who is proudest of all.



24...♕e6 After 24...♕xd1 25.♖xd1 (25.♗xf6!? ♕d5 26.♖e5 ♕d1+ 27.♖e1 ♕d5 28.♕g4 g6 with compensation for the exchange) 25...♖xd1+ 26.♔h2 ♖d5 27.♕e4 ♗xe5+ 28.♘xe5 ♖fd8 29.g4 it's tough for Black to avoid getting somehow trapped.

25.♖xd8



Another queen blunder?? Or a sacrifice...

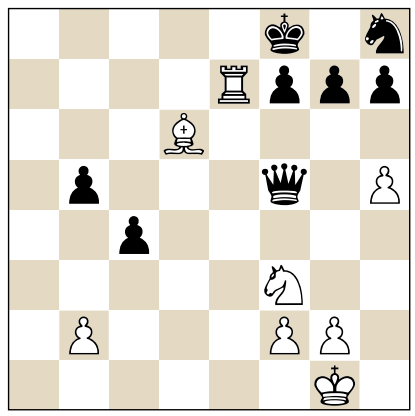
25...♕xf5??

He should have played 25...♖xd8 26.♕xe6 fxe6 27.♗xf6 gxf6 28.♖xe6 ♘f7 with an interesting, likely even endgame. Or 25...♗xd8 26.♘d4, with a white edge.

26.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 27.♗d6+ ♗e7

Black certainly saw through the complications and realized that I do not recover the material. However, along the weak 7th and 8th rank, Black's king is indeed in trouble.

28.♖xe7



Now Black has no good defensive ideas.

28...♕d3 Or 28...g6 29.h6 f6 30.♘d4 with a mating attack.

29.♖e6+ Black resigned. He will either step back with the king followed by mate or has to give up his queen. ■

IT'S A KNOCKOUT!

With a 20,000 pounds first prize, there are few, if any, tournaments outside the inaccessible round-robins or elite opens with as handsome a purse as the British Knock-Out Championship. Indeed, it was a great pity to miss the inaugural event, which runs alongside the London Chess Classic, in 2015, due to an illness which eluded correct medical diagnosis until it had almost passed. My substitute, Nick Pert, made the most of his opportunity with two underdog victories, before eventually succumbing to David Howell in the final. Health permitting, I would get my chance this time.

Michael Adams bestrides English chess like a colossus. Self-interest being human nature, it is likely that all eight knock-out participants were happy to see the back of him – invited, as a wild card, to the piranha-pool of the Grand Chess Tour. This left your columnist as top-seed – notwithstanding Loek van Wely's recent bitter and illegal attempts to sabotage my rating – and thus paired against the Cambridge mathematics undergraduate, Daniel Fernandez in the quarter-final.

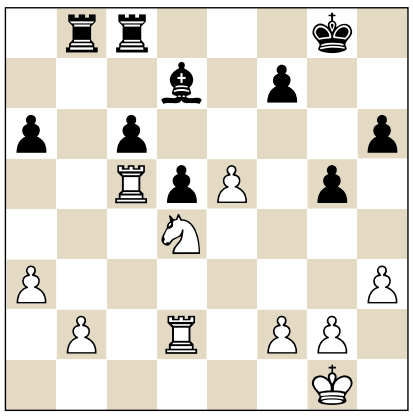
No two tournaments are exactly the same, but this one posed unusual logistical questions above and beyond purely chessic concerns. The first important decision to make was where to stay – a rare problem for me, given that I am almost invariably provided with accommodation by organisers. Not so here – not that anyone was complaining, given that even quarter-final losers were guaranteed the tidy sum of 2,500 pounds. Money aside, the best solution is generally to stay in a good hotel as close as possible to the venue. However, London prices are sky-high even for a mediocre establishment like the Hilton Kensington Olympia, and my instinctive parsimony railed at the thought of being gouged by rapacious hoteliers. Less exorbitant, but depressingly basic options were available, but in the end I opted to stay in my flat in Gray's Inn Road, a good 45 minutes away by teeming Central Line and foot. It is comforting to sleep in your own bed, but even now I am not sure whether I made the right decision.

One drawback immediately became apparent when I woke early out of anxiety to arrive punctually for the 11 a.m. start. A good night's sleep is more valuable than any amount of opening preparation – much more so with the pox of double rounds. Mini-matches are a lottery even at the best of times, and I knew well that the quarter-final would prove a much sterner task than the 211 Elo point rating difference suggested. So it proved. Fernandez survived a lengthy endgame with a pawn deficit, but now another problem arose – there was barely enough time to eat between games.

From a nutritional perspective, it was very risky, during a long day, to forego food altogether, and now I was reduced to foraging. Regrettably I was unaware of the excellent sashimi to be had at the Hare and Tortoise across the road, so instead I wolfed down a Club Sandwich in the hotel bar. Big blunder. The surfeit of carbohydrates left me dozing at the board. Thankfully my opponent failed to exploit my deplorably somnolent condition and I gradually obtained the better of the encounter before it petered out. By now I had woken up, however, and the ensuing rapid-chess tiebreak turned out very one-sided. First, not insignificant, obstacle overcome.

Luke McShane has been my bane ever since he inflicted a sadistic 163-move defeat on me at the London Classic in 2009. I had managed just one miserable draw in the last four games. In such psychologically troubling circumstances, it is essential to build self-confidence. Thankfully, one didn't have to look hard to find chinks in his armour. At the Baku Olympiad, McShane's tired opening repertoire had been a source of vulnerability. That could be masked but, more glaringly, his finely honed tactical skills appeared blunted too. I knew the opportunities would come – I just had to take them.

Nevertheless, I soon found myself in severe trouble yet again.

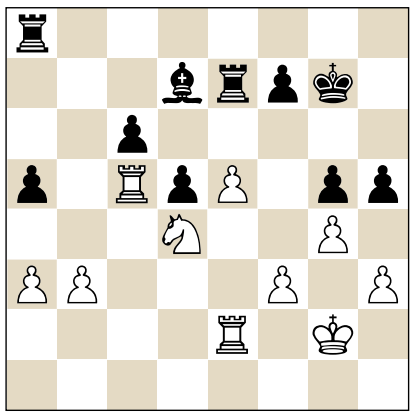


Luke McShane – Nigel Short
London British KO 2016 (2.1)
position after 26.a3

After mishandling an Open Spanish, Black has been reduced to contemptible passivity. I determined to seize whatever tiny sliver of counterplay was available.

26...a5!? 27.b3
It is obviously not necessary to allow the blockade to be lifted after 27.♖xa5?! c5.
27...♔g7 28.g4
Very committal. I was much more worried about 28.♔h2 with the idea of g3, f4 etc.
28...♖e8 29.♖e2 ♖a8 30.♔g2 h5
Mixing it.

31.f3 ♖e7!? I was not at all convinced that this exchange sacrifice was any good, but at least it was messy.



32.♔f2
Alas, Luke didn't spend any time considering the merits of 32.e6 fxe6 33.♘f5+ ♔f6 34.♘xe7 ♔xe7 35.gxh5 ♔d6 36.♖ec2 because he didn't see it.
32...♖ee8
Waiting patiently.
33.gxh5 ♖h8 34.♘xc6 ♗xc6 35.♖xc6 ♖xh5 36.♔e3?!
Losing control in his habitual time-trouble. He should have played 36.♖d2!.
36...♖b8! 37.♖c3 ♖xh3 38.♖d3
Avoiding his original fatal intention 38.♔d4? ♖h4+! 39.♔xd5 ♖d8+ winning.
38...g4 39.♖f2 ♔g6 40.♔f4 f5 41.♖xd5 ♖xf3+ 42.♖xf3 gxf3 43.♖d6+ ♔f7 44.♔xf3 ♖xb3+ 45.♔f4 ♖xa3
Draw.

After this narrow escape, another problem arose of my own making. A month previously, Pontus Carlsson had invited me to attend a dinner of the visiting Swedish Chess Academy and to give a short talk of about an hour. It is generally highly inadvisable to do extraneous activities during a chess event, but the pay was good and, besides, it did not seem like a lot of work. I accepted. Another blunder. I had failed to notice that the next round started at 10.30 rather than 16.30. The lobster and crab risotto, followed by steak béarnaise, washed down liberally with wine, was delightful. But by the time I had finished the jaunty tutorial, and caught a taxi home, it was already 1 a.m.

The Italian Game seemed a sagacious choice for someone in my fragile physical condition. An uneventful draw was always the most likely outcome. However rapid chess suits me well as I suffer neither the physiological stress of blitz (easily my worst discipline) nor fold through dearth of stamina – as with classical. In the tie-break, I blanked a rusty Luke 2-0.

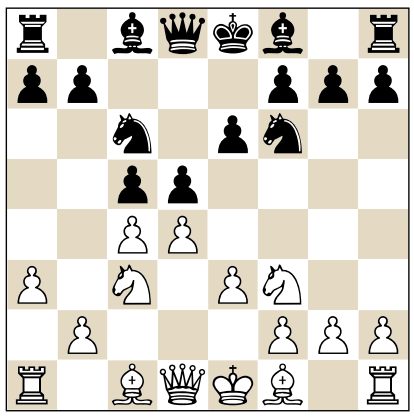
The final, against David Howell, had a discordant subtext. At the Baku Olympiad, over dinner with the team, I had attempted to offer my team-mate avuncular advice, which had been met with a brusque and unnecessary 'Go fuck yourself'. I would prefer to move on from this ugly incident – ideally with a short apology – but it appears, from a lengthy Facebook missive David sent me some days later, that for some reason he considers himself to be the aggrieved party. There the unresolved matter lay.

With the exception of a quick repetition in Game 2 (I was exhausted) it was a hard-fought match. At moments David showed the great talent and precision which took him to 2720 on the live ratings about a year ago. But his Achilles' heel – chronic indecisiveness, with attendant zeitnot – was also in full evidence. The breakthrough came in Game 4.

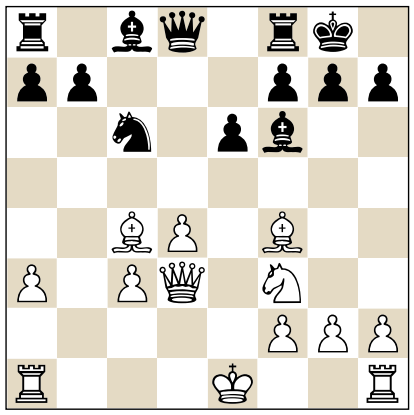
'From a nutritional perspective, it was very risky, during a long day, to forego food altogether and now I was reduced to foraging.'

Nigel Short
David Howell
London British KO 2016 (3.4)
Queen's Gambit Declined, Semi-Tarrasch Defence

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.e3 e6 5.d4 d5 6.a3



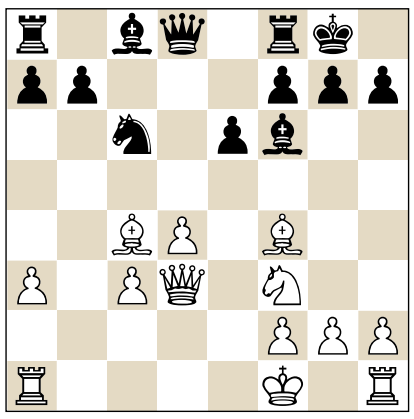
A fashionable line – during the Saint Amant-Staunton match of 1843. After a long think, David now embarked upon a slightly artificial manoeuvre.
6...cxd4 7.exd4 ♘e4
Exchanging knights on c3 comes naturally to any Grünfeld devotee. Here, however, it loses a little time.
8.♗d3 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♗e7 11.♗f4 0-0 12.♕d3
Quickly highlighting the main drawback of the black set-up – the absence of a protective kingside knight. The white queen eyes the vulnerable h7-square.
12...♗f6



13.♔f1!?

This move totally flummoxed the majority of spectators, not to mention quite a few grandmasters. Reactions varied from 'I like it' (Fabiano Caruana) to the cheekily deprecating 'If I had your rating, I would probably play moves like that' (Anish Giri).

Of course, my original intention was the vigorous 13.h4!?, intending 14.♘g5, but I was concerned that it would be met by 13...e5. However, it turns out that White is still better after 14.dxe5 ♕xd3 15.♗xd3 ♖e8 16.0-0 ♘xe5 17.♗xe5 ♗xe5 18.♖fe1 f6 19.♘xe5 fxe5 20.♖ad1. So, objectively, my prophylaxis was unnecessary. The text-move, though, had the benefit of sending my opponent into a long think. His response was predictably direct.

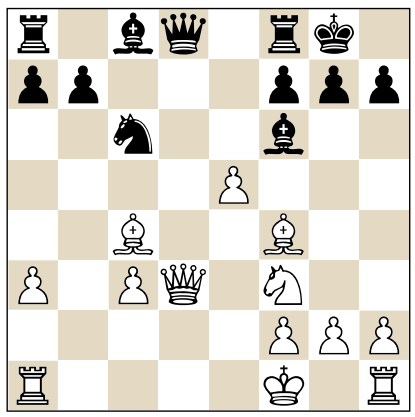


13...e5

Dr. John Nunn considered this to be dreadful, but I somehow 'knew' David was going to play it. With time-pressure building up, there is always a tendency to try and force matters.

Instead, there was 13...♕a5, but 14.♖e1!? is sharp and unclear. (My original concept was 14.h4 e5 15.♘g5 but this is well met by 15...♗xg5! (15...g6? 16.♘xh7! ♔xh7 17.h5 winning) 16.hxg5 g6 17.♗d2 ♗e6!, which is roughly equal.)

14.dxe5



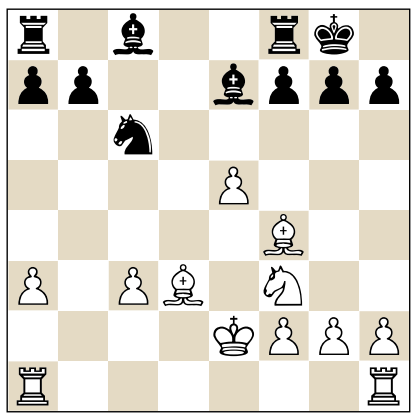
14...♕xd3+?!

Strangely enough this natural exchange is imprecise. It was better to retreat the bishop immediately.

15.♗xd3 ♗e7

Or 15...♗d8.

16.♔e2!



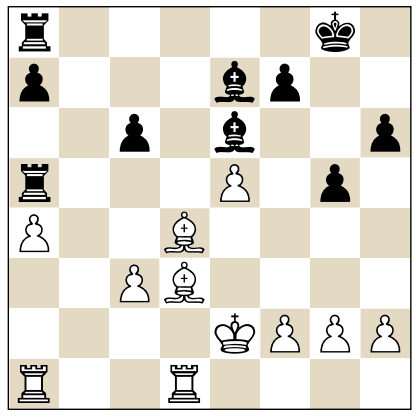
With the queens off, White need not fear his king being in the centre.

16...♖d8 17.♖hd1 h6 18.♘d4 g5

Strategically well-motivated. Black undermines the e5-pawn.

19.♘xc6 bxc6 20.♗e3 ♖d5

21.♗d4 ♖a5 22.a4 ♗e6



23.♖db1?! 23.♗e4! is correct.

23...♗f8 Now the e-pawn becomes a target again.

24.♗e4 ♗d5 25.♔d3 ♗xe4+

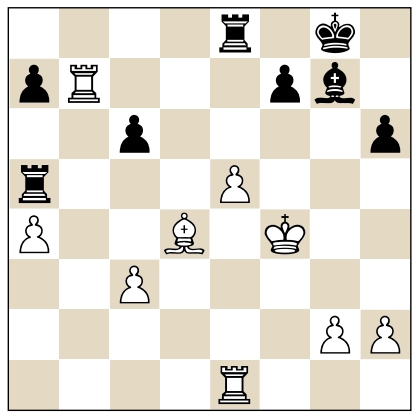
26.♔xe4 ♗g7 27.f4 gxf4

28.♔xf4 ♖e8 29.♖e1 ♖d5

White's advantage is in serious danger of evaporating. A few precise moves are required.

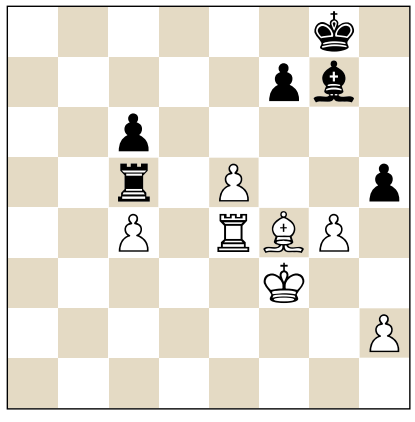
'Dr. John Nunn considered this to be dreadful, but I somehow "knew" David was going to play it. With time-pressure building up, there is always a tendency to try and force matters.'

30.♖ab1! ♖a5 30...c5 is met by 31.♖b5!. **31.♖b7**



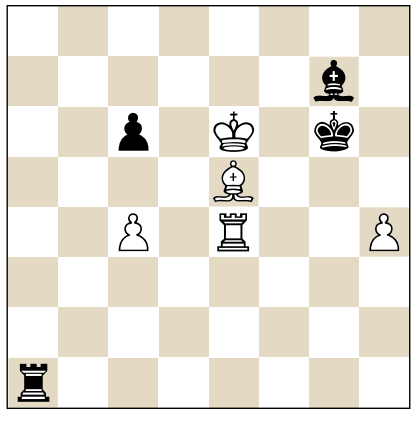
31...♗f8 31...♖xa4 is perhaps the best try although after 32.e6 ♖f8! 33.e7 ♖e8 34.♖e4 ♗xd4 35.♖xd4 ♖xd4+ 36.cxd4 f6! (36...a5 37.♔e5 ♔g7 38.♔d6 ♔f6 39.♖b3! winning) 37.♖xa7 ♔f7 38.♔f5 ♖b8 39.e8♕+

♔xe8 40.♔xf6, Black still faces an uphill task.
32.♖xa7 ♖xa7 33.♗xa7 ♖a8 34.♗f2 ♖xa4+ 35.♖e4 ♖a2 36.♔f3 ♗g7 37.♗g3 ♖a5 38.♗f4 ♖c5 39.c4 h5 40.g4!



Slightly counter-intuitive as, on principle, White would prefer to keep pawns on. Here though, the activation of the king is of paramount importance.

40...hxg4+ 41.♔xg4 ♖a5 42.h4 ♔h7 43.♔f5 ♖a1 44.e6 The easiest way. The black c-pawn falls quickly. **44...fxe6+ 45.♔xe6 ♔g6 46.♗e5!**



After the exchange of bishops, the win becomes trivial. The rest is not worthy of comment.
46...♗xe5 47.♖xe5 ♖d1 48.♖g5+ ♔h6 49.♖c5 ♖h1 50.♖xc6 ♔g7 51.♖c7+ ♔f8 52.♖c8+ ♔g7 53.c5 ♖xh4 54.c6 ♖c4 55.♔d6 ♖d4+ 56.♔c5 ♖d1 57.♖e8 ♔f7 58.♖e4 ♖c1+ 59.♔b6 ♖b1+ 60.♔a7 ♖c1 61.♔b7 ♖b1+ 62.♔c8 ♖b2 63.c7 ♖b1 64.♔d7 ♖d1+ 65.♔c6 ♖c1+ 66.♔d6 ♖c2 67.♖e5 Black resigned.

David struck back in the fifth when, after drifting, I allowed my queen to be trapped. But, although disappointed, I was not at all despondent. After all, who doesn't enjoy playing White in the final game? I slept early and eschewed preparation, preferring to keep my energy. An exceedingly double-edged English, with fractured pawn structures, swung in my favour when my rooks became very active. Under heavy pressure, David cracked in time-trouble, shedding an exchange, leaving a vapid technical task that was easily converted to victory. ■

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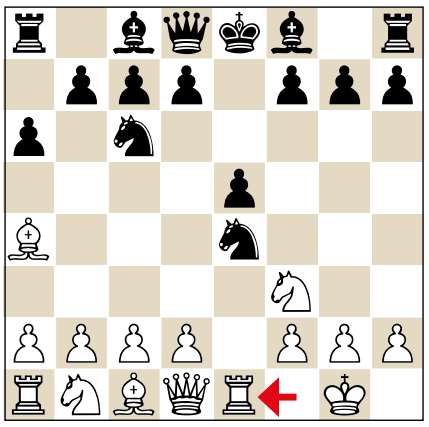
Surprise in the Open Spanish

Jeroen Bosch



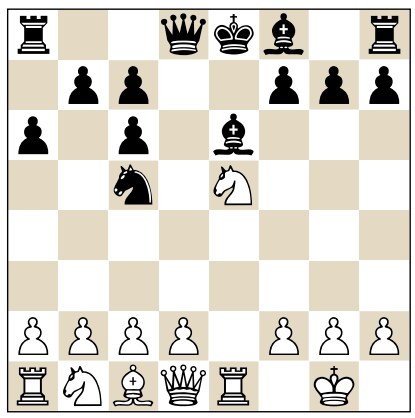
6.♖e1!?

‘What could be more natural? Black develops a piece and plumbs the e-file, and yet Kosteniuk’s next move will emphasize that something is wrong with Black’s position.’

The final leg of the 2015/16 FIDE Grand Prix series for women ended in Khanty-Mansiysk in December 2016. Ju Wenjun emerged as the sole victor in Siberia and the winner of the entire series, qualifying for a match against the Women’s World Champion – whoever she will be – for that has to established in a knock-out championship that is yet to take place. Gazing upon the games with SOS eyes, I was struck by a game of a former Women’s World Champion. In Round 8, Alexandra Kosteniuk played in coffeehouse style against the respectable Open Spanish, winning a pawn (and essentially the game) as early as move 10!

Alexandra Kosteniuk
Bela Khotenashvili
Khanty-Mansiysk 2016 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.♖e1!? ♘c5 7.♗xc6 dxc6 8.♘xe5 ♗e6?!

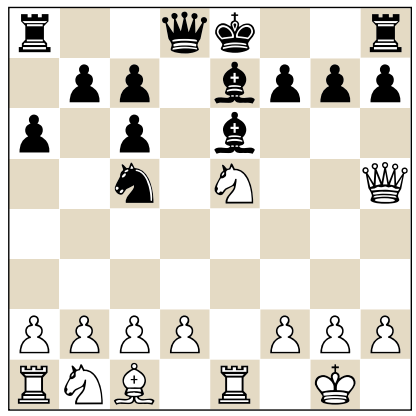


What could be more natural? Black develops a piece and plumbs the e-file, and yet Kosteniuk’s next move will emphasize that something is wrong with Black’s position.

9.♕h5!

Attagirl! This is the way to go, and as we will see later, there are several positions in which this crude approach leaves Black plenty to think about. Khotenashvili now went

9...♗e7 If 9...g6 then 10.♕f3! (threatening both 11.♘xf7 and 11.♘xc6), when Black’s best is the unattractive endgame after 10...♗e7 11.d4 ♕xd4 12.♘xc6 ♕f6 13.♘xe7 ♕xf3 14.gxf3 ♔xe7, when she will suffer after either 15.♘c3 or 15.♗f4. White is also for preference after 9...♕e7 10.d4 ♘d7 11.♗g5 ♘f6 (11...g6 12.♕e2!, planning 12...♕xg5? 13.♘xf7!, winning) 12.♗xf6! ♕xf6 (12...gxf6? 13.♘xf7!) 13.♘c3, and White is slightly better because of her edge in development – 13...0-0-0 will be met by the unpleasant 14.♘e4.



What did the former Women’s World Champion play next?

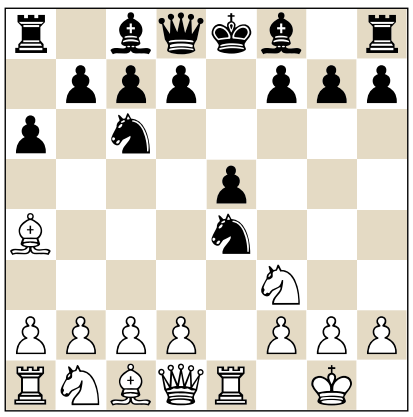
10.♘xf7! This tactic wins a pawn. **10...♗xf7** 10...g6? fails to 11.♘xd8 gxh5 12.♘xe6. **11.♕xc5** Having lost a pawn, Black has another problem to face: she can't castle. **11...♕d6 12.♕g5! ♔f8 13.♕g3** Even better was 13.♕a5 b6 14.♕a4±. **13...h5?!** The lesser evil was 13...♕xg3 14.hxg3. White is a sound pawn up in the endgame, but Black may place some hope (of drawing) on her bishop pair. After **14.d3 h4 15.♕h3 ♖d8 16.♘c3** Black had to settle for a queen swap anyway: **16...♕d7 17.♕xd7 ♖xd7 18.h3 ♖h5 19.♘e4 c5 20.b3** It took Kosteniuk almost 60 more moves, but she did convert her extra pawn.

This game demonstrates how success may be achieved by not always following the main lines. Khotenashvili (a GM!) was undoubtedly surprised by 6.♖e1 and quickly went wrong when Kosteniuk led her away from the proper main line. Having said that, you can't just play for tricks in all your games, and I am sure that Kosteniuk was well-prepared for the approved 8...♗e7. Let's see what she may have lined up there. Personally, I have drawn upon Victor Mikhalevski's excellent *The Open Spanish* (volume 13 in the Quality Chess series 'Grandmaster Repertoire'). While it is a repertoire book for Black, the Israeli grandmaster remains objective throughout.

Let's go through the Ruy Lopez motions once more:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.♖e1!?

The main line is of course 6.d4 b5 7.♗b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♗e6, as played by all the theory-guns.



The first crucial moment. Black has in fact only one decent reply here. It makes sense to compare our Open Variation with the Berlin Defence. The key difference is the position of the Spanish bishop. In the Berlin after 3...♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.♖e1 Black goes 5...♘d6, attacking the bishop (and not 5...♘c5?! 6.d4!). In our SOS line the bishop has been chased to a4, so that the knight should move to c5 to attack it.

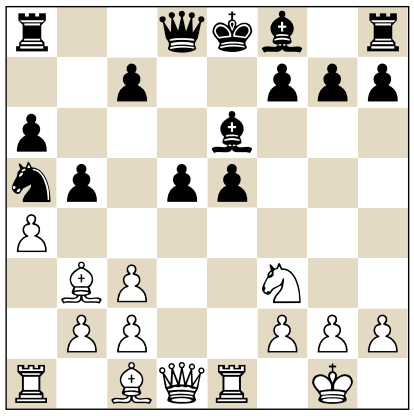
6...♘c5

So what happens if Black goes wrong here?

■ Plain bad is 6...d5 7.♗xc6+! bxc6 8.d3 ♘c5 9.♘xe5, and White should win. If 9...♘e6 then 10.♕h5!.

■ The Berlin reply 6...♘d6 doesn't gain time now, which means that White can just continue developing with 7.♘xe5 ♗e7 8.d4 0-0 9.♘c3, when the d6-knight is in the way. White gains an edge after 9...♘f5 10.♘d5.

■ Black cannot hope to transpose back into some line of the Open Variation, because after 6...b5 7.♗b3 d5 White goes 8.♘c3! ♘xc3 9.dxc3. Black is temporarily a pawn up, but both his central pawns are under attack, and White is developing fast. 9...♗e6 10.a4! ♘a5, and now



a very strong continuation is 11.♗g5!, for example:

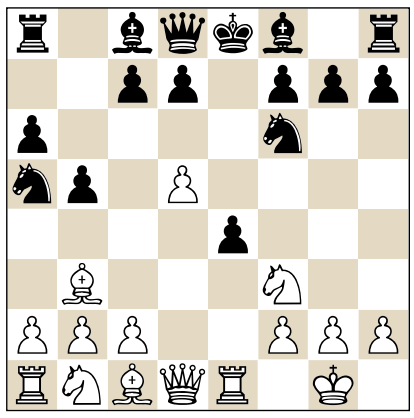
– 11...f6 12.♘xe5! wins: 12...♘xb3 (12...fxg5 13.♕h5+!) 13.♕h5+ g6 14.♘xg6 hxg6 15.♖xe6+ ♔f7 16.♕xh8 ♔xe6 17.♕g8+ ♔f5 18.♖d1!! c6 19.♗e3, and Black's king is in for a hard time.

– 11...♗e7 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♗xd5 ♖d8 14.♖xe5 ♘c4, and now the exchange sacrifice 15.♖xe6! fxe6 (15...♕xe6 16.♗xe6 ♖xd1+ 17.♖xd1 fxe6 18.axb5 axb5 19.b3) 16.♗c6+ ♔f7 17.♕e2, and White retains a considerable edge.

■ After 6...♘f6 White has a pleasant choice:

– 7.♘xe5 ♘xe5 8.d4! c6 9.dxe5 ♘d5 10.♗b3 ♘c7 11.♘d2 ♗e7 12.♘e4 left White clearly better in Brener-Diermair, Szeged 2007.

– 7.d4 e4 (7...b5 8.♗b3+–) 8.d5 b5 9.♗b3 ♘a5



and now 10.♘c3 ♘xb3 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♖xe4+ ♗e7 13.d6 cxd6 was seen in two games between Rosanes and Anderssen (Breslau 1862), but 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.d6!? is a powerful suggestion from Kortchnoi in ECO.

Clearly, Black is well-advised to stick to 6...♘c5.

7.♗xc6

Speed is of the essence. Structurally Black is absolutely fine, of course. Nothing is gained by 7.♘xe5 ♘xe5 8.♖xe5+ ♗e7 9.♗b3 ♘xb3 10.axb3 0-0. The move 7.♘c3 can be a tricky alternative (it has been played by strong players) but is often just a prelude to a fast draw. For example: 7...♗e7 8.♘d5 0-0 9.♗xc6 dxc6 10.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 11.d4 ♘e6 12.♘xe5, and draw agreed on move 19, Tal-Jussupow, Montpellier 1985.

7...dxc6 Black is asking for trouble with 7...bxc6 8.♘xe5 ♗e7 (8...♘e6 9.d4) 9.d4 ♘e6 10.f4 (or 10.c4) 10...h6? (10...0-0!), a clear mistake. After 11.f5 ♘g5 12.♕g4 (Hernandez-Fernandez, San Salvador 1995), Black was in dire straits.

8.♘xe5 Black achieves an excellent Berlin after 8.d4 ♘e6 9.dxe5 ♕xd1 10.♖xd1 ♗e7 or 10...h6.

Above we have seen what happens if Black now goes 8...♗e6?!. Remember Kosteniuk's 9.♕h5!, which I somewhat unfairly called 'coffeehouse style'. It is in fact the strongest move, and was first played by Loewenthal in 1854 to beat Messrs. Brien and Wormald. As we will see, this early queen sortie is an important theme in many lines.

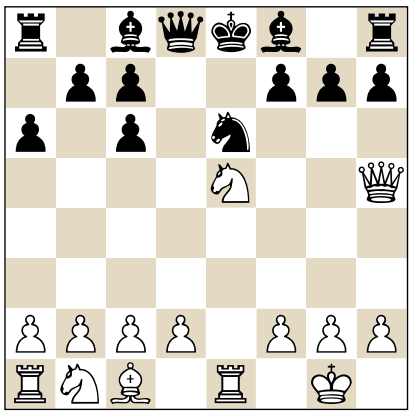
Let's now investigate the two remaining Black replies:

Variation I: 8...♘e6

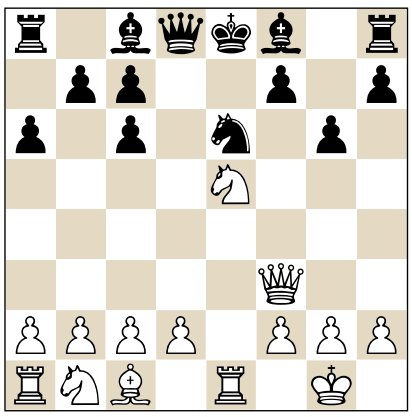
Variation II: 8...♗e7

Variation I – 8...♘e6

Now White again attacks the most vulnerable spot in the Open Games with **9.♕h5!** when Black faces a choice once more.



9...♕f6! Protecting f7 with 9...♕e7 leaves White slightly better after 10.c3 g6 (10...♘f4) 11.♕f3 ♗g7 12.♘xc6. More interesting is 9...g6 10.♕f3



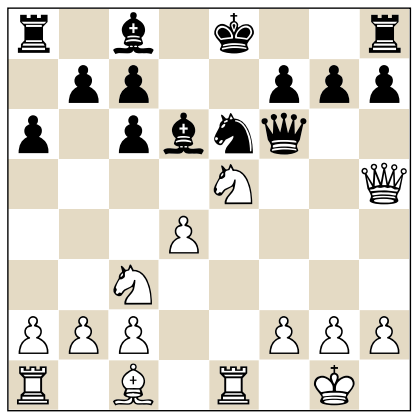
and now:

– 10...f5, when after 11.b3 ♗e7 12.♗b2 0-0 13.♘a3 a5 14.♘ac4 a4 15.♕e3 'White obtains a slight edge', according to Mikhalevski. The alternative is the overtly tactical 11.♕c3 ♗g7 12.♘xc6 ♕d7 (12...♗xc3 13.♘xd8±) 13.♘e5 ♕d5 14.♕f3 ♕xf3 15.♘xf3, and Black probably has enough for the pawn.

– 10...f6 is met by 11.♘xc6! bxc6 12.♕xc6+ ♗d7, when White must crash through with 13.♖xe6+ ♗e7 (13...♔f7 14.♖xf6+ ♔g7 15.♖xf8!) 14.♖xe7+ ♔xe7 (14...♕xe7? 15.♕xa8+ ♔f7 16.♕xa6 prevents a back-rank mate) 15.♕c3, and with two pawns for the exchange White is better – Black will be weak on the dark squares.

10.d4 ♗d6 Here Mikhalevski analyses 10...g6 11.♕d1 ♗g7 12.♘d2 0-0 13.♘df3 ♕d8! 14.♗e3 f6 15.♘d3 b6 16.c4 a5 17.♕b3 ♖e8, when in his opinion: 'Black reaches a playable position', but 'White keeps a slight edge'.

11.♘c3



11...♗xe5

11...0-0 12.♘e4 ♕d8 13.c3 ♗e7 14.♘g3 is given as slightly better for White by Mikhalevski. The position is not much fun for Black to play. White aims to put a knight on f5, and always has the general plan of ♗d2 and doubling on the e-file. Black has trouble developing and has to think about how to relieve the pressure on his kingside.

After the text, 12.dxe5 ♕g6 13.♕xg6 hxg6 was dead equal in Moran-Vincifori, Buenos Aires 2003.

After 12.♖xe5 0-0 13.♗e3, however, White will keep a small but nagging plus.

Variation II – 8...♗e7

9.d4

The main move. There are some alternatives that I do not propose to go into. The most interesting one is 9.b3 (good statistics in the database), but Black can equalize with a little accuracy.

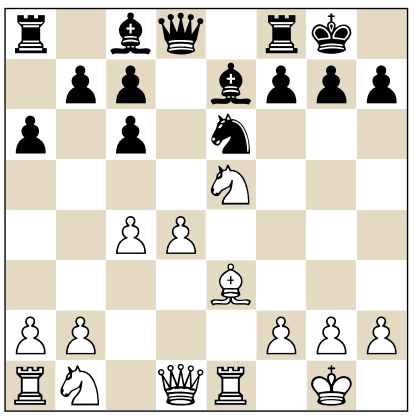
9...♘e6

Also logical is 9...♘d7, attacking the knight, when White should stop Black from castling: 10.♕e2 ♘xe5 11.♕xe5 ♗e6! 12.♕xg7 ♗f6 13.♕h6 (13.♕g3!) 13...♕xd4 14.♘d2 ♕h4 (14...♖g8!) 15.♘e4 ♕xh6 16.♗xh6 ♗e7 17.♗g5, and White eventually converted his slight (Spanish Exchange) plus, Petrushin-Kotenko, Novoshakhtinsk 2007.

10.♗e3

More popular is 10.c3, but in my opinion White must constantly remind himself that structurally Black is very OK. After 10.c3 0-0 White can go for 11.f4 ♖e8 12.f5, but after 12...♘f8 13.♕h5 Mikhalevski demonstrates that Black can rely on a tactical defence with 13...g6, while I think that the simple 13...♕d5 is also sufficient.

10...0-0 11.c4!



This was a favourite of the Latvian attacking genius Alvis Vitolinsh. White sets up a decent pawn centre and prepares the annoying ♕b3 (and sometimes the push d4-d5). Most other moves are met solidly by 11...f6, chasing away the knight and giving Black sufficient time to regroup and equalize.

11...f6 Black does well to get rid of the knight. The pawn will not be stuck on the ugly square f6 forever. Black often plans ...f6-f5-f4!.

No good is 11...♗f6 12.f4, and White has achieved all he wanted in the centre. In Patsovsky-Frolochkin, St Petersburg 2008, Black proposed to do without ...f6, but after 11...♖e8 12.♘c3 ♘f8,

rather than 13.d5?! White should play 13.♕b3 followed by ♖ad1, and Black is stifled, while White will be fully developed.

Not all that bad is 11...♗d6!?, provided that after 12.f4 Black still opts for 12...f6 13.♘d3, yet after 13...♗e7 14.♘f2 g6!? 15.♘c3 ♘g7, Dvirnyy-Krzyzanowski, Chotowa 2010, White keeps a plus with 16.d5!.

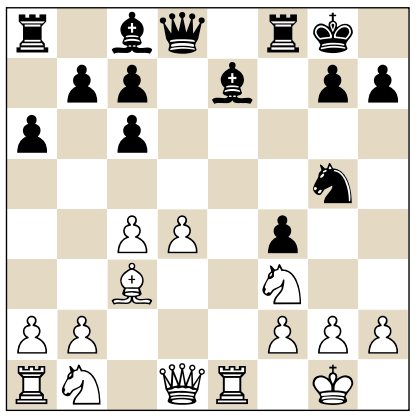
Trading pieces with 11...♗g5 does not bring full relief after 12.♘c3 ♗xe3 (12...f6 13.♘f3 ♗xe3 14.♖xe3! ♘f4, Baltag-Mamedyarov, Tallinn 1997, and now White's best bet is 15.d5, planning 15...cxd5 16.♕d4 ♘e6 17.♕xd5 ♕xd5 18.cxd5, with pressure) 13.fxe3 ♘g5 14.♕h5!? f6! 15.♘f3 g6 16.♕h4 ♘xf3+ 17.gxf3 ♗e6 18.b3 f5 19.♕xd8 ♖axd8 20.♖ad1⩲, Radulski-Dimov, Plovdiv 2010.

12.♘f3 f5

This looks like Black's best option, identifying the white bishop as a target to gain space (and possibly an attack) on the kingside. Mikhalevski suggests 12...♘g5!?, which is an interesting and untested idea, but White's position remains more pleasant after 13.♘xg5 fxg5 14.♘c3.

13.♘c3

White develops his last minor piece. White can also anticipate ...f4 by playing 13.♗d2!? f4 (Mikhalevski suggests 13...♗f6!? 14.♗c3 b5, but now 15.♘a3!? looks stronger than his 15.♕b3: 15...♖b8 16.♘c2 bxc4 17.♕e2) 14.♗c3 (14.♘c3 transposes to the comment on move 14 below) 14...♘g5

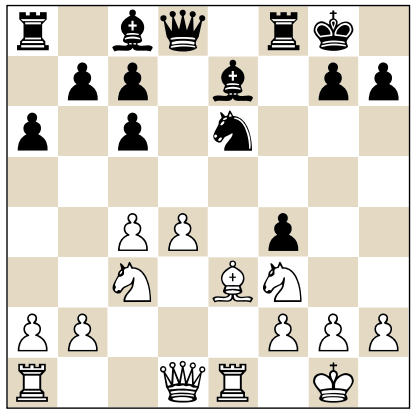


The lines now fork:

– 15.♘xg5 ♗xg5 16.f3 ♗f5 favoured Black in Gipslis-Averbakh, Riga 1958. Instead, 16.♕f3 is an improvement of Mikhalevski's, who goes on to suggest that Black should keep the position with 16...♗f6 17.d5 ♗d7 18.♘d2 ♗xc3 19.♕xc3 ♕f6, but even here 20.♕xf6 ♖xf6 21.♘e4 is a small endgame plus for White.

– 15.♘bd2 ♗g4 16.♕b3!? (Black should draw because of the opposite-coloured bishops after Mikhalevski's 16.♕e2 ♗f6 17.♕d3 ♘xf3+ 18.♘xf3 ♕d7 19.♘e5 ♗xe5 20.♖xe5 ♖ae8 21.♖ae1 ♖xe5 22.♖xe5 ♖e8) 16...♘xf3+ 17.♘xf3 ♗xf3 18.gxf3 ♖f6?! (here Black should restrict himself to 18...♖b8, which is equal) 19.c5+ ♔f8 20.♕xb7 ♖g6+ 21.♔f1, and since Black's attack isn't going anywhere, White has the better chances, Radulski-Lubczynski, Plovdiv 2008.

13...f4



14.♗c1

It is not essential to go all the way back: 14.♗d2!?

– 14...♘g5 15.♘xg5 ♗xg5 16.♘e4 ♗e7 (after 16...♗h6 17.♗b4 ♖e8, Tcebekov-Sandor, Budapest 1996, 18.♘f6+! gxf6 19.♕h5 wins back the piece and is unpleasant for Black) 17.♗c3 f3! was tense but fairly equal in Vitolinsh-Sagalchik, Minsk 1988.

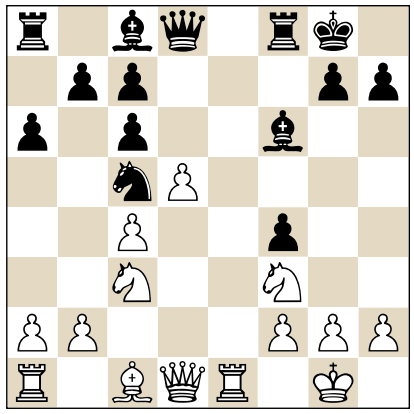
– 14...♗f6 15.♘e2! (15.d5 ♘c5 16.♘e5 ♗xe5 17.♖xe5 ♘d3∓, Vitolinsh-Mikhalchishin, Uzhgorod 1988) has long been known as an improvement for White, although no one has tried this in practice. Mikhalevski gives 15...♘g5! 16.♕b3 ♗e6!, but we may continue this line with 17.♖ac1!, when 17...b5 (Black comes close to equalizing with 17...♘xf3+ 18.♕xf3 ♕d7 19.♗xf4 ♗g4 20.♕b3 ♗xe2 21.♖xe2 ♗xd4) 18.♘xg5 ♗xg5 19.♘xf4 leads to interesting complications.

14...♗f6 With the bishop on c1 14...♘g5 is less good because of 15.♘e5 f3? (15...♗d6) 16.♗xg5! ♗xg5 17.g3 (17.c5! ♗e6 18.♘xf3) 17...♗f6 18.♕d3 ♗xe5 19.♖xe5 ♕d7 20.d5 ♕h3 21.♕f1, with a slight plus in Vitolinsh-Hermlin, Moscow 1979.

15.d5 ♘c5

Rossetti-Urbaniak, Internet 2010.

And now Mikhalevski continues with the following analysis:



16.♘d4! cxd5 17.♘xd5 c6 18.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 19.b4 And after the following forcing line, **19...♗g4!** 19...♘a4 20.♗a3. **20.♕xg4 ♕xd4 21.♗e3! ♕d7! 22.♕xd7 ♘xd7 23.♗d4 ♖fe8,** Black should hold this endgame without much difficulty – Mikhalevski. This may be true, but White is still the only one do to any pushing.

In conclusion, 6.♖e1 is obviously not the refutation of the Open Variation, but it is a fairly good surprise weapon. With plenty of pitfalls along the way, Black must stick to a narrow path: 8...♗e7 and 9...♘e6 and later on 11...f6 and 12...f5. After 13...f4 White must make up his mind about whether he prefers 14.♗d2 or 14.♗c1. In either case he may be able to nudge a small little something. A decent alternative for him is 13.♗d2 and 14.♗c3. 'Black should take care' is Mikhalevski's general conclusion about the entire line, and I couldn't agree more. ■

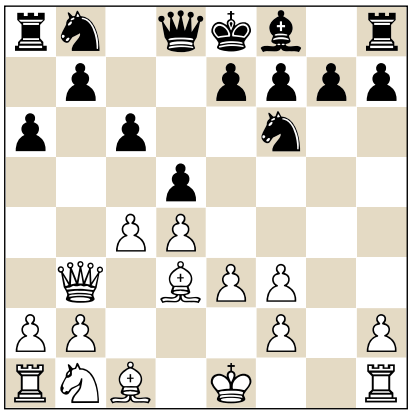
ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

A rookie move?

True, it's an extremely passive rook move that will send shivers down a sophisticated positional player's back, but your curiosity may be tickled if you replay the following game.

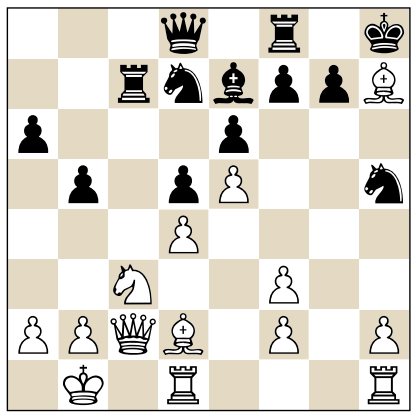
Anand-Morozevich
Dortmund 2001

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 a6 5.♗d3 ♗g4 6.♕b3 ♗xf3 7.gxf3



7...♖a7!? Putting a piece worth five points away on the shelf, only to protect the pawn on b7? Sure, after 7... b5 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.a4 the position might open up too quickly for Black, but would 7...♕c7 not be a much more sensible development? Morozevich's explanation from 2001 is down to earth: 'The normal continuation here is 7...♕c7, but if Black wants to fight, he has to devise something.' **8.♘c3 e6 9.♕c2** 9.♗d2 ♗e7 10.c5 e5 11.dxe5 ♘fd7, Tomashevsky-Ivanchuk, Paris 2013, is a more recent top-level outing. **9...♗e7 10.♗d2 0-0 11.0-0-0** Morozevich is critical of this move. He had expected White to castle to the other side, as the text-move makes it easier for Black to bring the a7-rook back into play (see Black's 15th move). Instructive commentary! **11...♘bd7 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.e4 ♔h8!? 14.e5 ♘h5 15.♗xh7 b5** This is what Morozevich meant: with the king on the queenside White is unlikely to start any action there with a2-a4. **16.♔b1 ♖c7**

At first glance it looks silly, but it's become a fairly normal move for many top players.

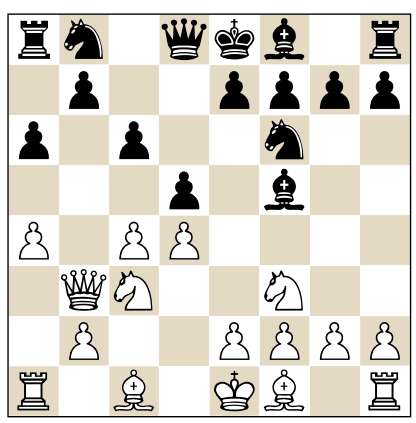


Only nine moves later the rook has developed perfectly to an open file! Would you have thought of that after move 7? Objectively the position might be equal, but after a couple of mistakes Anand quickly went down. **17.♕d3 ♗g5 18.f4 ♗xf4 19.♗xf4 ♘xf4 20.♕e3? ♕h4 21.♗c2?! ♖fc8 22.♗d3 ♘b6 23.♘e2 ♘xd3 24.♖xd3 ♘c4 25.♕f3 ♕e4 26.♕xe4 dxe4 27.♖h3+ ♔g8 28.♖d1? ♘xb2** 0-1.

The idea to follow up ...a7-a6 with ...♖a7 was not new, but I guess this swift victory over no less a player than Anand inspired many to consider this set-up in other (Slav-related) positions. In fact, earlier that year Morozevich had played this one:

Gelfand-Morozevich
Astana 2001

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 a6 5.a4 ♗f5 6.♕b3

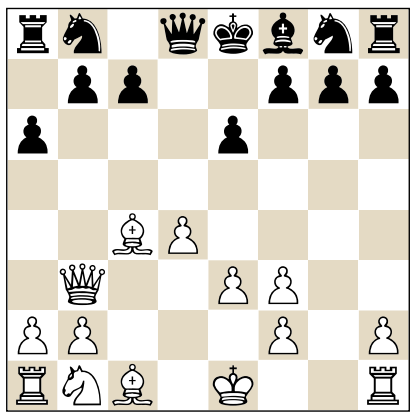


6...♖a7!? Morozevich, however, wrote that the parallels between these two games 'were incomprehensible to him, since ...♖a7 was played in two completely different positions'. Fifteen years later Gelfand does draw a parallel in *Positional Decision Making in Chess*. He argues that if Black is in time to consolidate with ...e7-e6 and ...♘bd7, he will be able to bring his rook back into the game, just as in the Anand game. Gelfand rightfully calls ...♖a7 here a provocation. Who would not think that White should be able to punish such frivolous play? Gelfand adds: 'It forces White to play energetically.' Which Gelfand did: **7.a5 e6** 7...dxc4!?. **8.♕b6 ♕xb6 9.axb6 ♖a8 10.c5** And Gelfand went on to win a fine game (1-0, 36).

You might consider Moro an experimental player and think that moves like ...♖a7 are not for you, but as Gelfand argues, Moro's experimental style also came about thanks to serious and hard work on his openings. He may have known the following game:

Botvinnik-Flohr
Moscow 1945

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 a6 4.e3 ♗g4 5.♗xc4 e6 6.♕b3 ♗xf3 7.gxf3



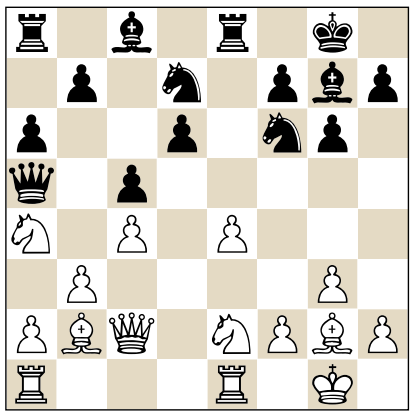
7...♖a7!? Yes, the concept goes a way back! Botvinnik mentions a game of Alekhine's against Van Scheltinga (Olympiad 1939) as the source, but that seems wrong, since in that game Alekhine was not afraid to continue with 7...b5 (although he had to work hard for a draw later), so in this position the idea has to be attributed to Flohr, who was to repeat it a couple of times, despite his loss in this game. **8.♗d2** 8.♘c3 ♘f6 9.0-0 c5 was seen in Keres-Flohr, Moscow 1949. **8...♘f6 9.♘c3 ♘bd7** It looks as if Black can allow himself 9... b5 10.♗e2 c5. **10.♗e2! c5 11.d5 e5 12.a4 ♗d6 13.0-0 ♕e7 14.♔h1 e4** This seems too early. More sensible is 14...0-0, although White is better. **15.♖g1 exf3 16.♗xf3 ♘e5 17.♗e2 0-0 18.f4 ♘g6 19.♗d3** And Botvinnik went on to win. This time the reactivation of the a7-rook was too slow.

Clearly the early rook manoeuvre can be attractive, but it is not without risk. Black should beware of possible backward development or lack of space.

And it's not only a move in the opening. There are many other moments when a similarly modest and seemingly passive rook move may be useful.

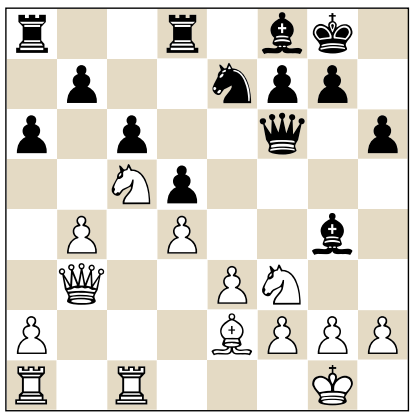
Fuster-Petrosian
Portoroz 1958

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.b3 g6 4.g3 ♗g7 5.♗b2 0-0 6.♗g2 c6 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.c4 ♖e8 9.♘c3 e5 10.e4 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♕b6 12.♘a4 ♕a5 13.♖e1 a6 14.♕c2 c5 15.♘e2



15...♖a7!? Not to protect pawn b7 this time, but to get away from the diagonal of White's bishop on g2. Also a common incentive, but then, why not the natural 15...♖b8 ? Apparently, Petrosian considered the a-file to be as important as the b-file. Soon the game proved his prophylactic idea right: **16.♘ac3 b5 17.cxb5** 17.♖ad1!?, keeping the a-file closed, seems more testing, but White should reckon with 17...bxc4 18.bxc4?! ♘e5. **17...axb5** And by now, of course, the rook is logically placed on the half-open file. **18.a4 bxa4 19.♖xa4 ♕b6 20.♖xa7 ♕xa7** With equality. Nothing spectacular, but eventually Petrosian proved to be the stronger player (0-1, 51).

You might compare this with the following idea:



Kramnik-Aronian
Stavanger 2014
position after 16.♘c5

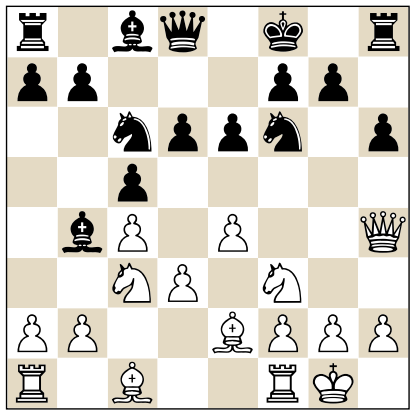
16...♖a7!? 17.a4 ♘c8 When the immediate 18.b5 is out of the question because of 18...axb5 19.axb5 ♖xa1 20.♖xa1 ♗xc5.

'As Gelfand argues, Moro's experimental style also came about thanks to serious and hard work on his openings.'

Let's finish with an example that highlights a more direct goal of our move.

Portisch-Taimanov
Budapest 1959

1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 ♗b4 3.e4 c5 4.♕g4 ♔f8 5.♘f3 ♘f6 6.♕h4 d6 7.♗e2 ♘c6 8.0-0 h6 9.d3



9...♖h7!? Unpinning the rook pawn and simply preparing ...g7-g5. This is reminiscent of the theoretical line 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 a6 8.♕d2 b5 9.a3 ♕a5 10.♖a2!?, where White's unpinning prevents the advance ...b5-b4. **10.♘e1 g5 11.♕g3 ♘d4 12.♗d1 e5 13.h4?** Playing at the wrong side of the board, helping the h7-rook to become active. **13...♘e6 14.♘c2 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♘f4 16.d4?! ♖g7** And Taimanov soon converted his clear advantage: **17.♕h2 ♘xe4 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.♗f3 ♘xc3 20.♗b2 g4 21.♗d5 ♘ce2+ 22.♔h1 g3 23.fxg3 ♘xg3+ 24.♔g1 ♘fe2+ 25.♔f2 ♕f6+** 0-1.

Never forget how much an unlikely rook move may do for you! ■

Oohing and aahing

As he looked at the final harvest of 2016, our reviewer **MATTHEW SADLER** came across a masterpiece that he enthusiastically proclaimed his Book of the Year!

We start with a hefty hardback tome of 584 pages, Victor Mikhalevski's *Beating Minor Openings* published by Quality Chess. The scope of the book is amazing. You can divide the book into two parts:

1. A pure repertoire book: Chapters 1-12.
In this part of the book, Mikhalevski deals with the complete scala of non 1.d4/1.e4 openings and provides a single recommendation against each of them. You name it – Bird's Opening (1.f4), 1.b3, Sokolsky (1.b4) – it's in there! I am bit sad that the essential refutation to one of my favourite blitz lines – 1.g4 d5 2.♗g2 – is now there for all to see in print!

As you would expect, Mikhalevski dedicates the most time and space – Chapters 5-12, which comes to about 150 pages – to an examination of 1.c4, against which he recommends 1...e5.

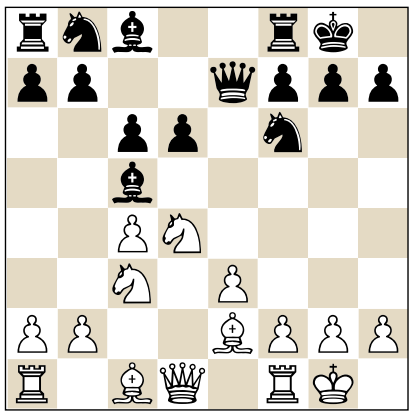
2. Something for everyone against 1.♘f3: Chapters 13-27.
This is the most impressive part of the book. Your choices in the first few moves against 1.♘f3 are determined by the opening that you play against 1.d4. A KID player would not be happy with a recommendation of 1...d5 against 1.♘f3, as he would really want to answer 2.d4 with 2...d5-d6! Mikhalevski makes the brave choice of offering three different antidotes, based on the type of system you play against 1.d4.

Chapters 13-18 deal with 1.♘f3 d5 (for 1.d4 d5 players), Chapters 19-22 look at 1.♘f3 ♘f6 and 2...b6 (for Nimzo-Indian/Queen's Indian players) and Chapters 23-27 deal with Mikhalevski's personal speciality: 1...♘f6 and 2...g6 (for KID/Grünfeld players).

This comprehensive approach has pluses and minuses. You may feel that a third of the book will be useless to you if you only have one Black opening against 1.d4. On the other hand, it does mean that every Black player can find a complete repertoire for himself against minor openings. Moreover, I would expect White 1.♘f3 players to be more than a little interested in the last 15 chapters of the book.

Mikhalevski has clearly put a massive effort into this work and I would recommend it unreservedly to anyone looking for guidance against an oft neglected part of the repertory. Just a couple of quibbles held me back from giving it the full five stars. The first point is unavoidable when you consider the breadth of the material Mikhalevski deals with, but it should still be mentioned. Repertory books normally recommend openings with a certain goal: broadly either to beat weaker players, or to draw against stronger players. Throughout the book, the main recommendations waver a little bit between both goals, which I found a little confusing. You do need to look critically at the recommendations to see whether a particular line will achieve the goal you are looking for.

The example that comes to mind immediately is Mikhalevski's recommendation in the line 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗b4 3.♘d5 ♗c5 4.♘f3 c6 5.♘c3 d6 6.e3. After 6...♕e7 7.d4 exd4 8.♘xd4 ♘f6 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0



Mikhalevski recommends the pawn sacrifice 10...d5 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♘b3 ♗d6 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♕xd5 ♖d8 15.♕f3 ♘c6 16.♖d1 ♗e5. This pawn sacrifice doesn't give Black any scary counterplay against the white king: Black hopes that he will be able to recapture the sacrificed b2-pawn when White develops his queenside. In the ensuing lines you see that with the help of engine analysis, Black manages to keep afloat and avoid losing his b7-pawn once he grabs the pawn on b2, but it's slightly

fraught. I would be willing to go into this against a strong player, but I would much rather play a completely different line if I wanted to maximise my chances of winning against a weaker player.

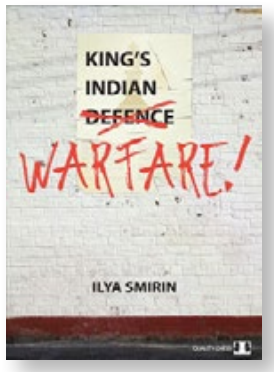
The second quibble is a feeling that has been growing on me recently while reading other opening books as well, so it's not just specific to this book. In a number of places, long lines are given which must be the product of engine analysis (when I type in the games with the engine running, more or less the same lines come out... and they usually end in draws by repetition...). It's not really something you can (or should) avoid as an author of opening books, but my feeling is that such lines should still be attributed rather than presented as the author's sole work. I find that I understand an author's recommendations much better when I know where he is following his own course and where he is using the engine's calculating ability to make a line work. Negi is the shining exception to this criticism: he always lets you know in which sort of positions you can trust the engine, and when you should think for yourself.

Once again though, these are just minor and personal grumbles. It's an excellent book, worthy of 4 stars!

■ ■ ■

Beating Minor Openings by Victor Mikhalevski
Quality Chess
2016
★★★★☆

King's Indian Warfare by Ilya Smirin
Quality Chess
2016
★★★★★

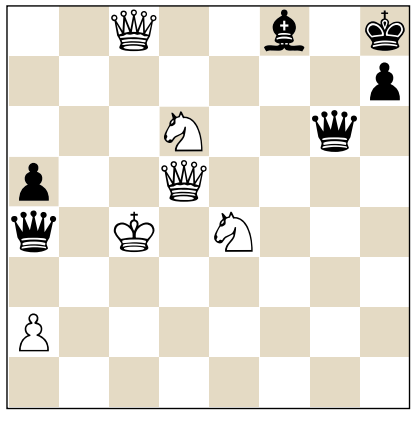


King's Indian Warfare by Ilya Smirin (Quality Chess) is a truly fantastic book. It is a collection of 49 of Smirin's best KID games played between 1986 and 2016. The games are organised according to a number of well-known themes – such as 'The King's Indian Bishop' – and less well-known themes such as 'Knight Agility'. Each chapter starts with a couple of inspirational game fragments (normally by other players) to introduce a theme before diving into Smirin's games. Probably the best description of the book is in the foreword by Boris Gelfand: 'Reading this book will give you a different type of insight into the King's Indian. It's not a theoretical book, where you get answers to your opening questions – and probably the King's Indian is not meant to be played in such a clinical way. Ilya's games have great instructive value, to be sure – but this is also a book for pleasure and inspiration. For players who enjoy wild chess, who value imagination, creativity and epic fights on the board, this book will be a treat.'

I can only agree and echo these words. Any player looking to take up the King's Indian should have this book thrust into his hands before he learns a single line of theory! I have been frankly awed at the number of fantastic games that Smirin has played and haven't stopped oohing and aahing as I've played through them. Smirin's comments are also a perfect balance of analysis and general advice; it's just the right level to be able to read it easily without a board. Let's give you a few tasters!

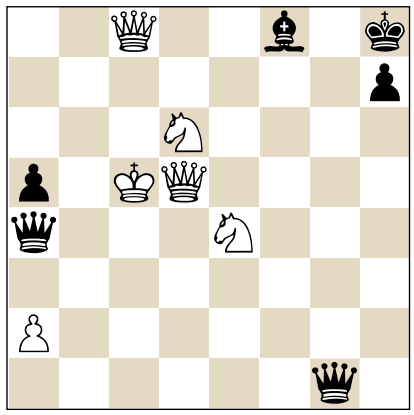
'Smirin's games have great instructive value – but this is also a book for pleasure and inspiration.'

First of all, the wonderful conclusion to the crazy battle Bareev-Smirin, Moscow rapid 2002.



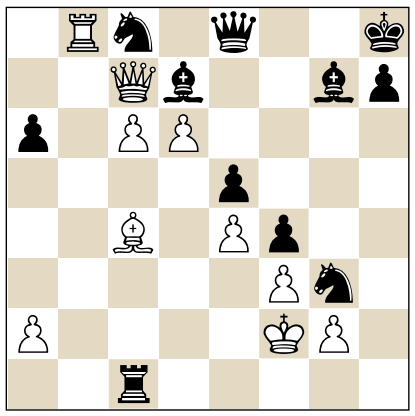
Bareev-Smirin
FIDE GP Moscow 2002
position after 45...♕a4

46.♔c5 A blunder, but try playing this position with only 10 second increments! **46...♕g1+**



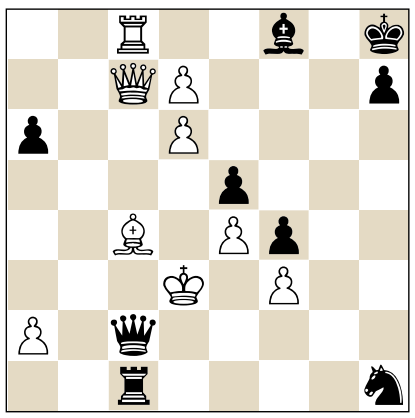
An amazing mating pattern! 0-1.

The next amazing game is Smirin's conclusion to the chapter on line opening, between two Danish players. I played against Auchenberg at the Copenhagen Open in 1992, so I'm wondering whether this amazing game took place at the same tournament. Take a look at this!



Auchenberg-Elgaard
Copenhagen 1992
position after 34.c6

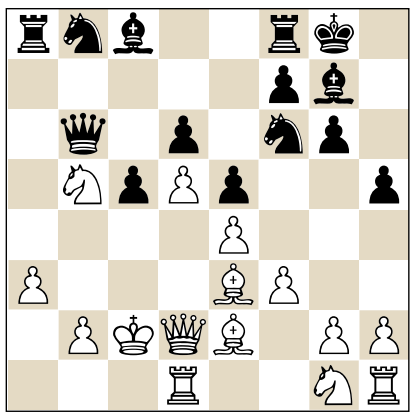
34...♕g8 35.cxd7 ♗f8 36.♖xc8 ♘h1+ 37.♔e2 ♕xg2+ 38.♔d3 ♕c2



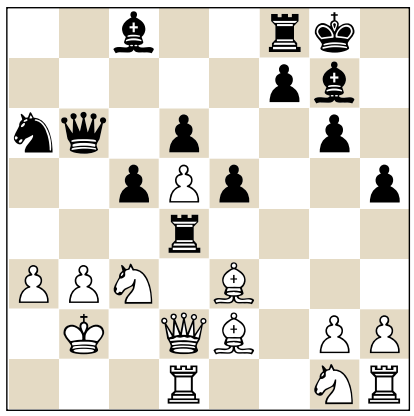
Can you believe that? Mate!

Perhaps my favourite chapter of the whole book was the chapter entitled 'Kamikaze Rooks'. Which lunatic would come up with these manoeuvres?

Viacheslav Dydyshko
Ilya Smirin
Belorussia 1986
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0-0 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗e3 e5 8.d5 c6 9.♕d2 h5 10.f3 a6 11.0-0-0 ♕a5 12.♔b1 c5 13.a3 b5 14.cxb5 axb5 15.♘xb5 ♕b6 16.♔c2

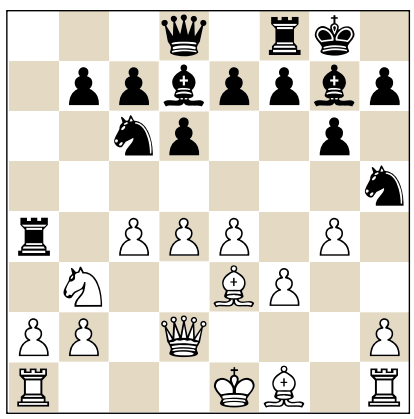


16...♖a4 17.b3 ♘xe4 18.fxe4 ♖xe4 19.♔b2 ♘a6 20.♘c3 ♖d4

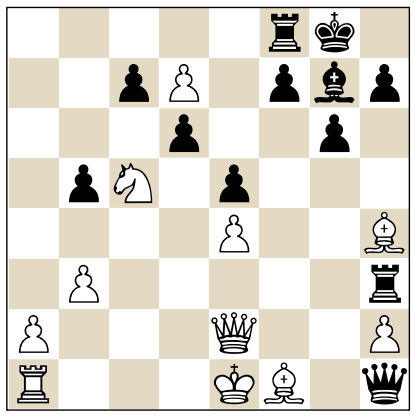


That's a real King's Indian player! Black went on to win after many adventures. And if that's not enough, just watch the rook go in this game!

Iveri Chigladze
Ilya Smirin
Baku 2009
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.♗e3 ♘c6 7.♘ge2 a6 8.♕d2 ♗d7 9.♘c1 ♘h5 10.♘b3 a5 11.g4 a4 12.♘xa4 ♖xa4

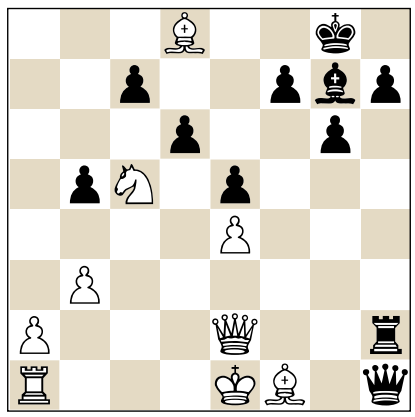


13.gxh5 e5 14.d5 ♕h4+ 15.♗f2 ♕xh5 16.dxc6 ♕xf3 17.cxd7 ♕xh1 18.♘c5 ♖xc4 19.♕e2 b5 20.b3 ♖c3 21.♗h4 ♖h3



22.d8♕ ♖xd8 23.♗xd8 ♖xh2

Black is Back!
by Andras Adorjan
New In Chess
2016
★★★☆☆



24.♕xb5 ♕f3 25.♗e2 ♕c3+ 0-1.
My favourite book of the year 2016!

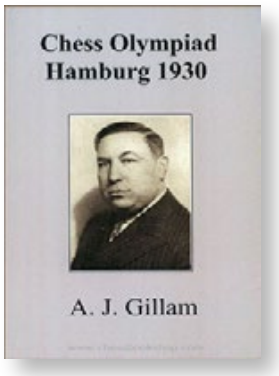
■ ■ ■

Black is Back! by Andras Adorjan (New In Chess) is a typically individual offering from one of the leading Hungarian players of the 80s and 90s. The book is both a presentation of his best games between 1962 and 1999 and a continuation of his 'Black is OK' argumentation. For example, Chapter 4 discusses a table presenting the percentage scores of the top 100 players with White and Black, Chapter 6 is a 'guest chapter' by Peter Boel, documenting the Nakamura-Gelfand matchups in which Black has scored significantly better than White (12 wins with Black up to 2013 compared to 1 win with White!) while in Chapter 9, Adorjan attempts to demonstrate that White's task in building up a convincing opening repertory is far more onerous than Black's. The whole book is typical of the player: quirky and original. The annotations are not deep, but there are plenty of interesting moments worthy of study.

■ ■ ■

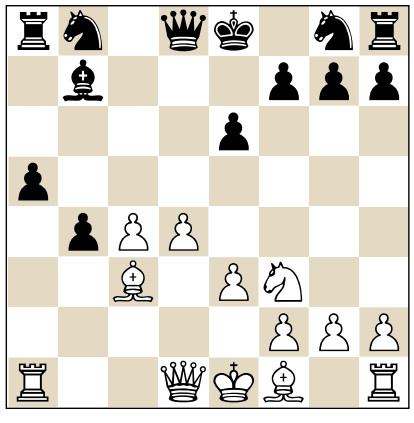
The last book I'll review this time was an impulse purchase: *Chess Olympiad Hamburg 1930* by Tony Gillam (The

Hamburg 1930
by Tony Gillam
The Chess Player
2016
★★★★☆

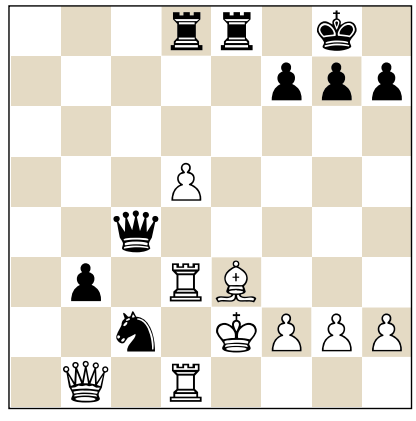


Chess Player). The author has managed to collate information about this Olympiad, held in Hamburg to celebrate the centenary of the Hamburg Chess Club, from all sorts of different sources. There are photos, scoresheets, newspaper reports, caricatures and annotated games. Flicking through the games, I saw the Poland-British Empire match in which the great Akiba Rubinstein took on Sultan Khan with his patented 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.♘bd2 opening, continuing with 3...c5 4.e3 ♘c6 5.a3. I wonder how long it will be before we see this in a World Championship match? I'm having a lovely time just opening the book at random and discovering a little treasure from time to time. This game caught my attention – a dashing Noteboom... by its inventor!

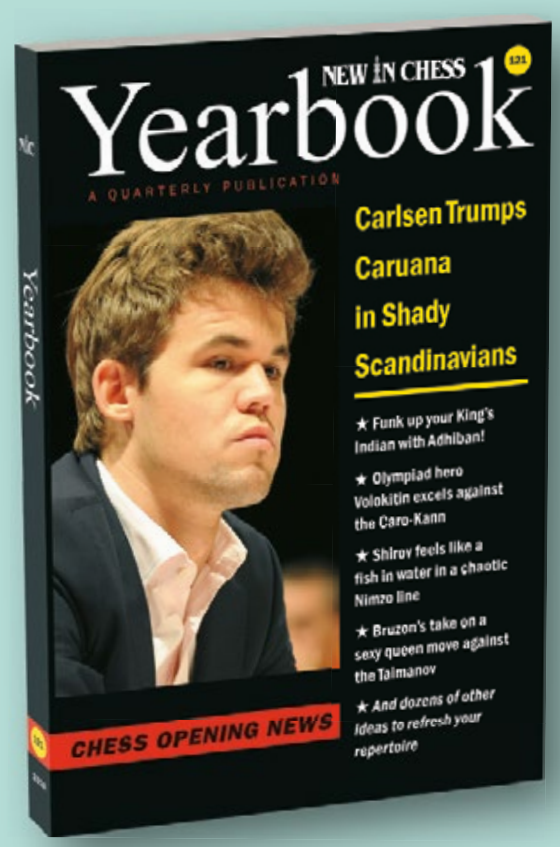
Andre Voisin
Daniel Noteboom
Hamburg Olympiad 1930
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6 4.♘f3 dxc4 5.a4 ♗b4 6.e3 b5 7.♗d2 ♗b7 8.axb5 ♗xc3 9.♗xc3 cxb5 10.b3 a5 11.bxc4 b4



The famous Noteboom structure.
12.♗d2 ♘f6 13.♘e5 ♘bd7 14.♕a4 0-0 15.♘c6 ♗xc6 16.♕xc6 e5 17.♗e2 ♖e8 18.♗f3 ♖c8 19.♕a6 exd4 20.♖xa5 ♘c5 21.♕b5 ♘b3 22.♖a2 ♖b8 23.♕f5 dxe3 24.♗xe3 ♘d4 25.♕b1 b3 26.♖d2 ♕a5 27.♗d5 27.0-0 ♘xf3+ 28.gxf3 ♖xe3 wins, so White is still unable to castle. **27...♘c2+ 28.♔e2 ♕c3 29.♖hd1 ♘xd5 30.cxd5 ♕c4+ 31.♖d3 ♖bd8**



32.♔d2 32.♕xb3 ♘d4+ would cost the queen. Lovely multiple pins! **32...♖xd5 33.♖xd5 ♕xd5+ 34.♔c1 ♕c6 35.♔b2 ♕f6+ 36.♔xb3 ♘xe3 37.fxe3 ♖b8+** 0-1. ■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Jan Timman

Mark Taimanov's sense of initiative

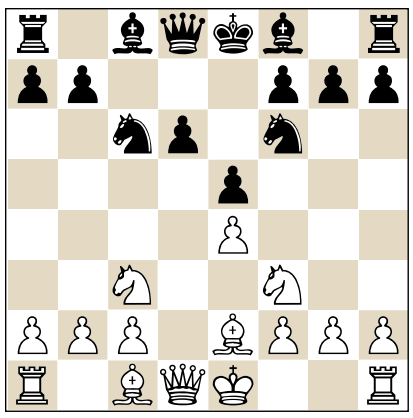
JAN TIMMAN looks at highlights from Mark Taimanov's rich career and returns to the legendary combination in the game Ortueta-Sanz. New evidence suggests that this game was never played.

Mark Taimanov was probably at the height of his powers in the 1950s. In the 1952 Soviet Championship he beat both Botvinnik and Bronstein, the pair that had contested the world title a year earlier. He ended up sharing first place with Botvinnik, and that he lost the decider by a whisker was certainly nothing to be ashamed about. Four years later he did become Soviet Champion when he defeated Boris Spassky and Yuri Averbakh in a play-off.

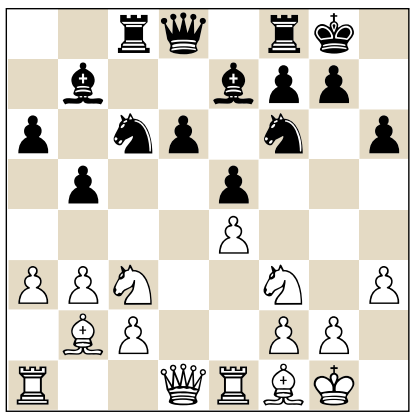
Taimanov had an enterprising style of play, strategically well-considered and with an excellent sense of initiative. In my younger years, I was much impressed by his win against Unzicker, which I had found in Pachman's *Moderne Schachstrategie* .

Wolfgang Unzicker
Mark Taimanov
Saltsjöbaden 1952
Sicilian Defence,
Boleslavsky Variation

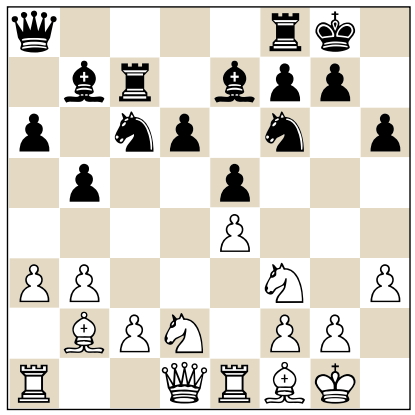
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗e2 e5 7.♘f3



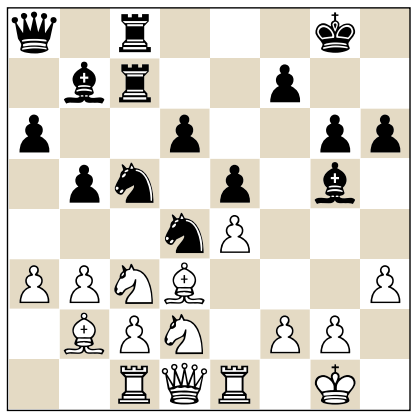
7...h6! An important little move that was already known at the time. Black prevents the bishop sortie to g5.
8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♖e1 0-0 10.h3 a6 11.♗f1 b5 12.a3
Slightly passive. Taimanov himself had played 12.a4 here as White, intending to meet 12...b4 with 13.♘d5. The immediate 12.♘d5 is also possible.
12...♗b7 13.b3 ♖c8 14.♗b2



14...♖c7! A strategic idea known from the Réti Opening: Black clears the way for the queen, which will start putting pressure on the white position from a8.
15.♘b1
This is far too passive. Now Black can realize his strategic plans at his leisure.
15...♕a8 16.♘bd2



16...♘d8!
Another subtle move. Black transfers the knight, which will be very strong on e6.
17.♗d3 ♘e6 18.♖c1 ♖fc8 19.♘h2 ♘d7 20.♘hf1 ♘dc5 21.♘g3 g6
Very systematic play.
22.♘e2 ♗g5 23.♘c3 ♘d4



All black pieces have taken up their best positions. The white position soon succumbs.
24.♘cb1 d5 25.exd5 ♘xd3 26.cxd3 ♖xc1 27.♗xc1 ♗xd5 28.f3 ♖c2 29.a4 b4 30.♔h1 ♕c6
White resigned.

Now, decades later, it strikes me that the game was extremely easy and that Unzicker played far too passively. But it's a very instructive example for young players of how to build on a strategic advantage.

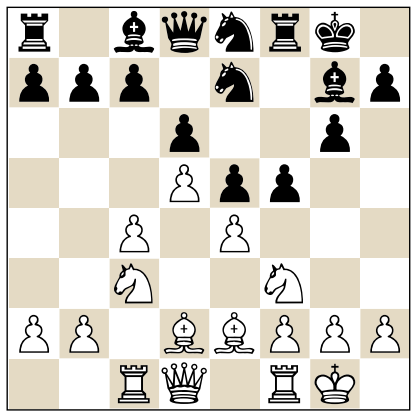
I continued to be impressed by Taimanov. In 1970 he won the Hoogoven tournament in Wijk aan Zee in impressive style. I replayed all his games. But a year later, his chess career derailed: he lost 6-0 to Fischer and lost all his privileges in the Soviet Union.

He actually played his first game against Fischer very well, but lost the thread in time-trouble.

The match that would change his life. Mark Taimanov j'adoubes a piece at the start of the first game against Bobby Fischer. Chief arbiter Bozidar Karic is ready for the photographers, too.

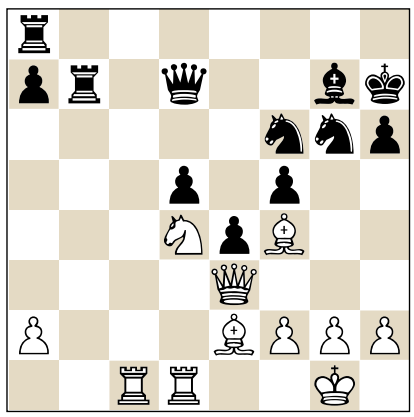
Mark Taimanov
Bobby Fischer
Vancouver 1971, Game 1
King's Indian, Yugoslav Attack

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♗d2 This modest bishop development was fashionable in those days. In earlier games, Taimanov had played 9.♘e1, e.g. in his win against Bronstein. **9...♘e8 10.♖c1 f5** Fischer allows the knight sortie to g5, after which the play gets very sharp.

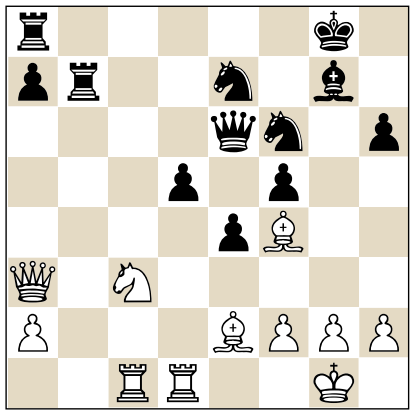


11.exf5 gxf5 12.♘g5 h6 13.♘e6 ♗xe6 14.dxe6 ♕c8 15.♕b3 c6 16.♗h5 ♕xe6 17.♕xb7 ♘f6 18.♗e2 ♖fb8 19.♕a6 ♖xb2 20.♖fd1 e4 21.♕a3 ♖b7 22.♗f4 d5 23.cxd5 cxd5
Up to this point, both players had invariably found the strongest moves.

The text, however, is inaccurate, since it gifts square b5 to the white knight. Correct was 23...♘exd5, with equal chances.



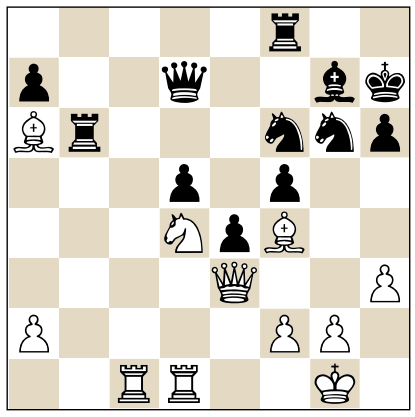
'He actually played his first game against Fischer very well, but lost the thread in time-trouble.'



24.♘b5! Now White takes the initiative. **24...♘g6 25.♘d4 ♕d7 26.♕e3 ♔h7**

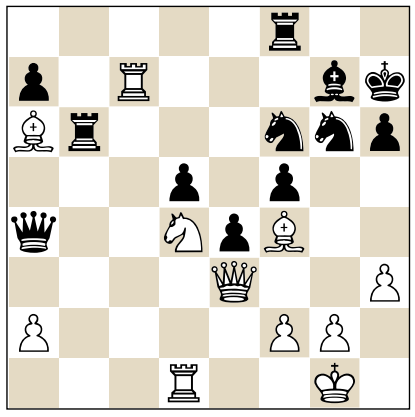
27.h3 Too cautious. He wants to play his bishop to a6, but first prepares against a knight sortie to g4. This was unnecessary, and 27.♗a6 instead would have yielded White a large advantage, but over the board it was hard to calculate that after 27...♘g4 28.♕g3 ♘xf4 29.♗xb7 ♗xd4 30.♕xf4 ♗xf2+ 31.♔h1 ♗b6 White has the intermediate move 32.♗c6!. The move indicated by Kasparov in *My Great Predecessors* Part IV, 27.♗b5, was also slightly stronger than the text. After 27...♘g4 28.♗xd7 ♘xe3 29.♗xe3 ♖xd7 30.♘xf5, Black must find the accurate move 30...♖ad8! to maintain the balance.
27...♖f8 Now Fischer has optimized his defence. **28.♗a6 ♖b6** The play would have become very sharp after

28...♘h5, a move that Kasparov would probably have played. In the spectacular variation 29.♗xb7 ♘gxf4 30.♗c6 ♕d6 31.♔f1 ♘d3! 32.♖xd3 ♕h2! 33.♘e6! exd3 34.♔e1 White will just manage to hold.



29.♖c7 Probably a miscalculation. White should have played 29.♗b5 first, when after 29...♖xb5 30.♖c7 ♕e8 31.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 32.♗xh6+ ♔f7 33.♗xf8 ♘xf8 34.♘xb5 ♕xb5 35.♕xa7+ the position is equal.

29...♕a4!



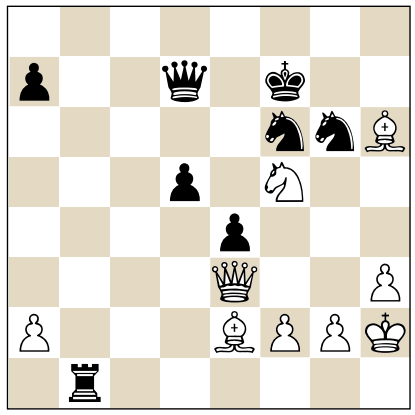
The black queen attacks not only the rook and the bishop, but also – indirectly – the knight. This becomes clear after 30.♗e2 ♘e8!, and Black wins.

30.♖xg7+ A forced exchange sacrifice.

30...♔xg7 31.♗xh6+ ♔f7

An understandable move: Black takes his king to a more or less safe zone. Yet, 31...♔h7 would have been stronger, since this would tie the white queen to the defence of the queen's bishop. According to Kasparov, this would have been winning for Black, but if White continues with 32.♕d2, he has every chance to defend successfully.

32.♗e2 ♖fb8 33.♘xf5 ♖b1 34.♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 35.♔h2 ♕d7



36.♘d4 A step in the wrong direction. Correct was 36.g4!, to keep the knight in its mighty position. Kasparov calls the advance 'a dangerous exposure of the king', but today's computers beg to differ. After 36...♖b2 37.♗d1 ♖xa2 38.♔g2 the position is dynamically balanced. Because of the dominant position of the white knight the white king is safer than its black

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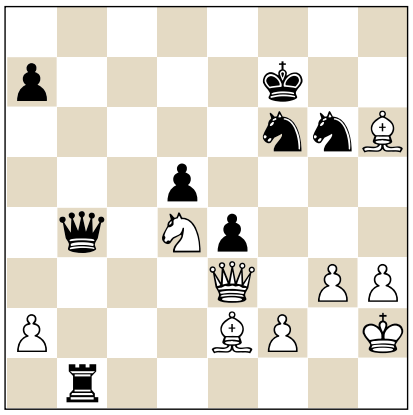
colleague, so I, for one, would prefer to play this position as White.
36...♕d6+ 37.g3 ♕b4

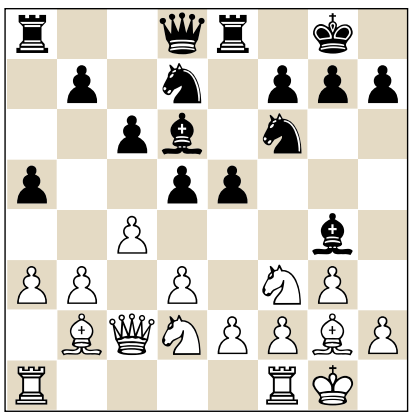


38.♘c6 And now the knight has truly lost its way. It should have retreated to f5. **38...♕b6** Forcing a queen swap that leaves White with a lost position. **39.♘xa7 ♕xe3 40.♗xe3 ♖e1** 0-1. An extraordinarily interesting and exciting game, which must have cost Taimanov a considerable amount of energy; he certainly never recovered from this defeat.

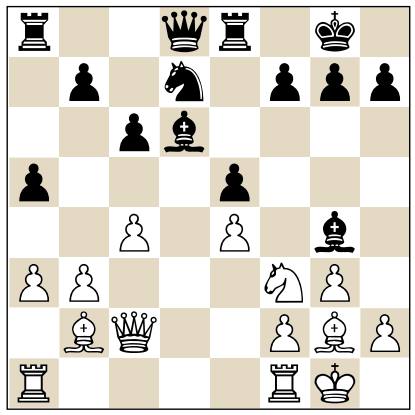
At the time of Taimanov's punishment at the hands of the Soviet authorities, I started my professional career, with the result that I have played only one game against him: in Wijk aan Zee 1981. I won with Black, and it is one of my best games.

Mark Taimanov
Jan Timman
Wijk aan Zee 1981
English Opening

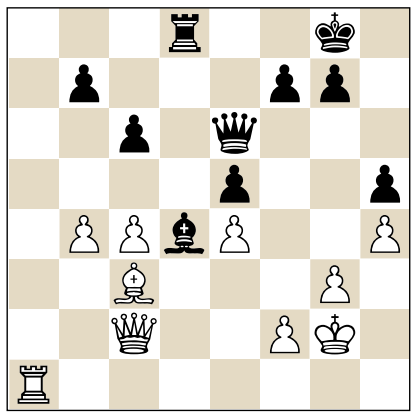
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 c6 4.b3 ♗g4 5.♗b2 e6 6.0-0 ♘bd7 7.d3 a5 8.a3 ♗d6 9.♘bd2 0-0 10.c4 ♖e8 11.♕c2 e5



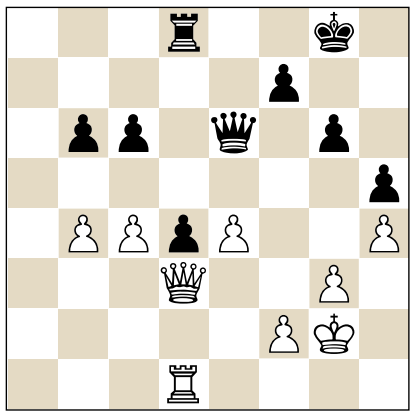
12.e4 12.h3 would have been more accurate. Now Black gets an easy game.
12...dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.dxe4



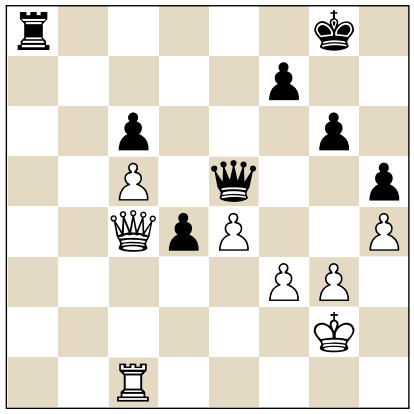
14...♗c5! The start of the fight for the crucial square d4.
15.♖fd1
After this move Taimanov offered a draw, which I refused because I was not in the habit of playing short draws. Besides, Black already boasted a slight initiative.
15...♕f6 16.h3 ♗xf3 17.♖xd7 ♖ad8! Now White cannot take on b7, since 18.♖xb7? ♕g5! 19.♗xf3 ♖d2! suddenly gives Black a decisive attack.
18.♖xd8 ♖xd8 19.♗c3 ♗d4 20.b4 axb4 21.axb4 h5 22.h4 ♗xg2 23.♔xg2 ♕e6



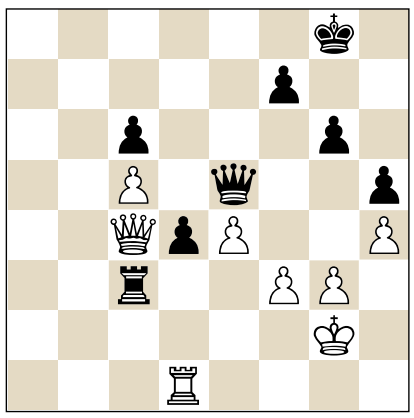
24.♕d3
White would probably have been best advised to swap bishops, although this would give Black a strong passed pawn. The computer assesses the chances as equal, but this type of position is easier to play for Black.
24...g6 25.♗e1 ♕f6 26.♖d1 ♖a8 27.♕b3 ♕e6 28.♗c3 ♖d8 Forcing White to swap bishops anyway, since Black is threatening 29...b5.
29.♗xd4 exd4 30.♕d3 b6!



With the positional threat of 31...c5, giving Black a protected passed pawn.
31.c5 bxc5 32.bxc5 ♕e5 33.♖c1 ♖e8 34.f3
At the time, I thought this was seriously weakening and that White would have been better off withdrawing into a rook ending by shedding the e-pawn. But according to the computer, Taimanov's move is the best one.
34...♖a8 35.♕c4



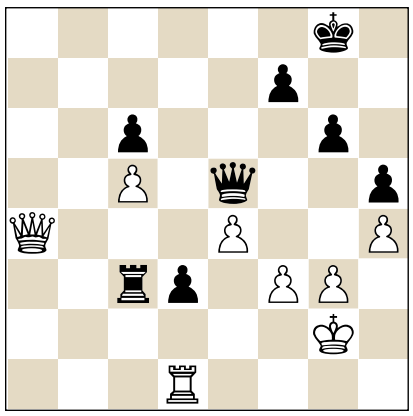
35...♖a3!
With the idea of sacrificing the d-pawn for an attack – except that it is not decisive, as I thought then.
36.♖d1 ♖c3



37.♕a4 White wants to prevent the black pieces penetrating the second rank, but he should still have played

37.♕xd4. After 37...♖c2+ 38.♔h3 ♕e6+ 39.g4 hxg4+ 40.fxg4 ♕a2, the situation looks hopeless for White, but he can save his himself with 41.♖d3!, enabling the white king to flee to e5 or g5.

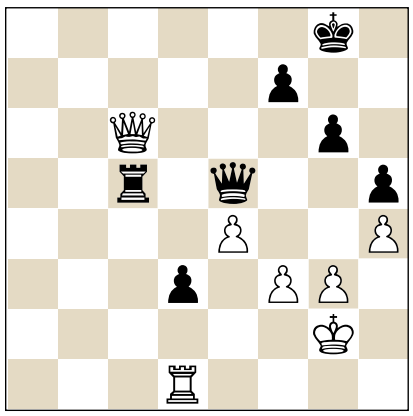
37...d3



Now Black keeps both his d-pawn and his attack. White is lost.

38.♕xc6 ♖xc5

In time-trouble I decided to capture this pawn first. The alternatives, 38...♖c2+ and even 38...♖c1 – intending to go for a queen ending – would have won more quickly.



39.♕a8+ 39.♕b6 would have been more tenacious. In that case, Black wins with 39...♖c2+ 40.♔h3 ♖e2!, with the point that the white position will collapse after 41.♕d8+ ♔g7 42.♕xd3 ♕e6+ 43.g4 hxg4+ 44.fxg4 ♖xe4.

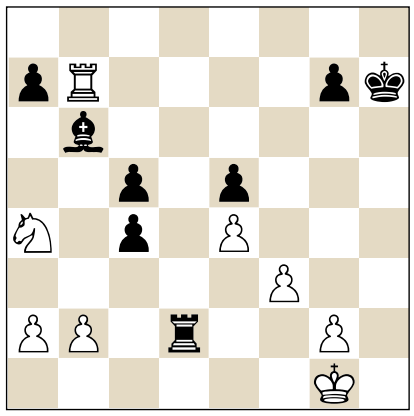
39...♔h7 40.♕a6 ♖c2+ 41.♔h3 ♕b2

0-1. This was the only game that Taimanov lost in Wijk aan Zee, where he finished in shared third place. Although already in his mid-50s, he had no problem operating at top level.

■ ■ ■

Is Ortueta-Sanz another fake?

In *The Art of the Endgame*, I wrote extensively about the famous combination from Ortueta-Sanz, Madrid 1933, arguing that the game Tylkowski-Wojciechowski, Poznan 1931, which ends with the same combination, must be fake for the simple reason that the play was, at times, so illogical and bad that it is impossible that this was a real game. Meanwhile, it is beginning to look as if Ortueta-Sanz is equally fake. The Spanish chess historian Pablo Moran already suggested this in 1994. In November 2012, Joaquim Travesset wrote a long article in *Ajedrez 365* in which he argued, based on Sanz's character, that the game never really took place. This was followed by an even more interesting piece of news from Jan Kalendovsky in 2015: he had unearthed an old newspaper article from the *Tagesbote*, a newspaper in Brno, from April 14th 1934, which stated that the Swedish player Ored Karlin had played the following finishing combination in a tournament in Madrid a year earlier:



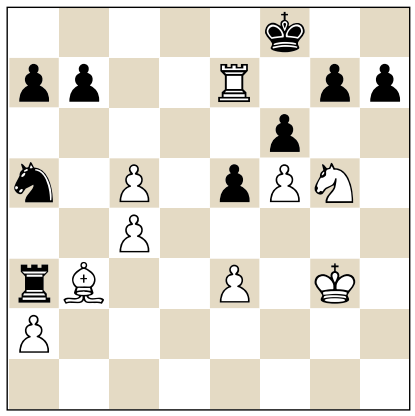
Karlin was supposed to have been Black (against a player whose name was not mentioned), and the moves given in the article were 1...♖xb2 2.♘xb2 c3 3.♖xb6 c4 4.♖b4 a5, and White resigned.

It's interesting to compare the three positions from which the combination started. In Tylkowski-Wojciechowski and Ortueta-Sanz the queenside set-up was also identical. The differences are on the kingside. The position of the two kings is always the same, and the g-pawns cannot be anywhere else. The rest of the pawn structure is always different. Tylkowski-Wojciechowski has white pawns on f4 and g3 and a black one on h6; in Ortueta-Sanz there is a white pawn on h3 and black pawns on e6 and g5. The latter set-up is the only one in which the combination works. White cannot have a pawn majority on the kingside, since that would make it easy for him to make a fortress. This is how Karlin's opponent – if he even existed – resigned in a drawn position.

'Is it possible that the players found the combination on that occasion instead of playing it?'

After 5.♘xc4 c2 6.♖a4 c1♕+ 7.♔h2 ♕c2 8.♖xa5 ♕xc4 9.♖xe5 Black has no winning chances whatever, and some time earlier, White could have kept the position in perfect balance with 4.♘xc4 c2 5.♖c6. It is curious that the combination works best with only the two g-pawns on the board. The rest is ballast. In Edward Winter's *Chess Notes* I read that there must have been a tournament in Madrid in 1933 in which all three players, Karlin, Ortueta and Sanz, participated. This is an intriguing thought: is it possible that the three players *found* the combination on that occasion instead of playing it? In that case, there must have been disagreement about the question of who would claim the honour. It certainly wasn't Ortueta!

The famous endgame composer Henri Rinck was asked a propos of the game Ortueta-Sanz if the final combination could be turned into an endgame study. According to Tartakower, he replied: 'Nothing needs to be added, nothing needs to be cut.' This is remarkable: he could have mentioned that there were some unnecessary pawns on the kingside. But it is true that it is hard to add anything essential to it in a study. In *The Art of the Endgame,* I made some attempts to achieve this, but in the end I wasn't very happy with them. This is why I hereby present another version in which the two kings also play a part:



Timman 2017
White wins (original)

This is also a very natural position. White must start by checking the black king to force it onto a worse square.

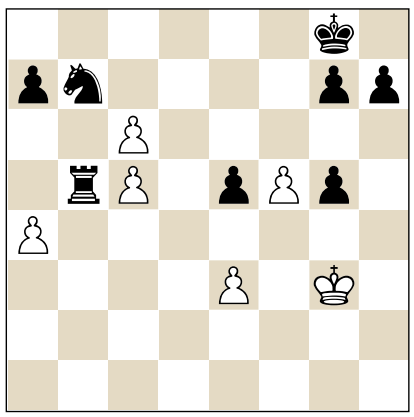
1.♖f7+ ♔g8 2.♖xb7!

Insufficient for the win was 2.c6. After 2...bxc6 3.♖xa7 fxg5 4.c5+ ♔f8 5.♔g4 ♘c4 6.♖c7 ♘xe3+ 7.♔xg5 ♘d5 8.♖c8+ ♔e7 9.♖xc6 ♘f6 10.♖c7+ ♔d8 11.♖xg7 ♖a6! Black holds on by his fingernails.

2...♘xb7 3.c6 ♖xb3 4.c5! ♖b5 5.a4!

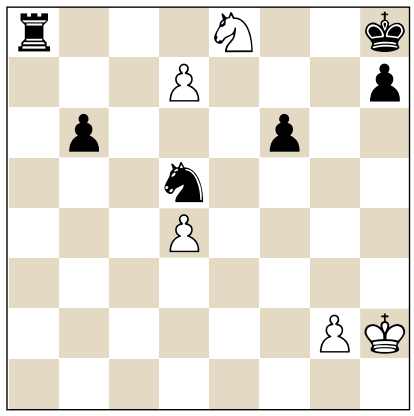
Everything according to plan. Now there's an intermezzo.

5...fxg5 After this capture the position of the white king starts playing a part. White cannot take the rook in view of 6.axb5? ♘xc5 7.c7 ♘e4+, and the knight goes to d6 to stop the pawn from queening.



6.♔h3!! A sublime silent move. White removes the knight check. **6...g4+ 7.♔h4!** Again avoiding all checks. **7...g3** There now follows some nice final play. **8.axb5 g2 9.cxb7 g1♕ 10.b8♕+ ♔f7 11.♕xa7+ ♔f6 12.♕a6+!** The only check that wins. **12...♔xf5 13.♕c8+ ♔e4 14.♕g4+!** Liquidating to a winning pawn ending. **14...♕xg4+ 15.♔xg4 ♔d5 16.b6** And wins. The white king is going to penetrate via f5 and e6. Certainly not, however, 16.c6? ♔d6, with a draw.

What Rinck did not say was that he knew a study with a similar combination. I recently found the following study in Van der Heijden's database:



L.Hanssen
Fodor Illustrations Verlag 1932
White to play and win

At the first glance, it seems as if White cannot hope for more than a draw, but despite all appearances,

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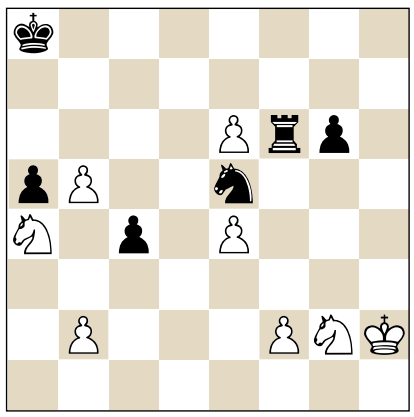
Black will be unable to sacrifice his rook for the foremost d-pawn.
1.♘d6 ♘c7 Or 1...♘e7 2.d5! ♔g8 3.♘c8! ♖xc8 4.d6!, and wins.
2.d5! Taking square e6 away from the black knight, while at the same time preparing the final combination. **2...♖f8 3.♘e8!** Now the knight penetrates on the other side. **3...♖xe8 4.d6!** And wins.

This combination is very similar to the Madrid One, as this other, famous combination may probably best be called; pawns win against rook and knight without looking particularly threatening. In both cases, it is doubled pawns that upset the coordination in the enemy camp. Despite the fact that Hanssen's study was given first prize in the tourney organized by Fodor Illustrations Verlag, it received almost no recognition in the world of chess studies. In 1999, I composed a study based on the same combination. Although that study got a fair amount of recognition – it can be found on Tim Krabbé's website – no one has ever told me that there was an anticipation. Yochanan Afek didn't know Hanssen's study either. Rinck, however, must have known it, since he won third prize in that same tourney. It was a strange event. There isn't a single other Hanssen study to be found in the entire database. Shared first prize was awarded to an (incorrect) study by V. Kemnic, another person you will look for in vain in the database. The famous Russian Leonid Kubbel finished in second place: two complete outsiders outclassing two renowned study composers. It makes you wonder about the organizer of the tourney.

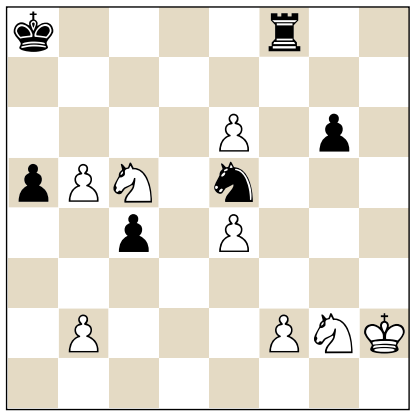
Fodor Illustrations Verlag was established by the Hungarian-born screenwriter Laszlo Fodor in the late 1920s. It published a magazine that contained mainly caricatures. Fodor was Jewish. In 1933 the Nazis took over his company. The tournament in Madrid must have taken place around the same time. Is it possible that one of the participants knew Hanssen's study? This may have been the way in which the step to the other combination was taken.

In promotion (or anti-promotion) combinations – Hanssen's study, the Madrid combination and the Prokes manoeuvre – it is always important that one of the kings is in a safe position and cannot be subjected to enemy checks. This makes it difficult to compose studies on this theme in which one of the kings – or both – play a part. I have already presented a study in which I eventually managed to do this. With Hanssen's combination it can also be done.

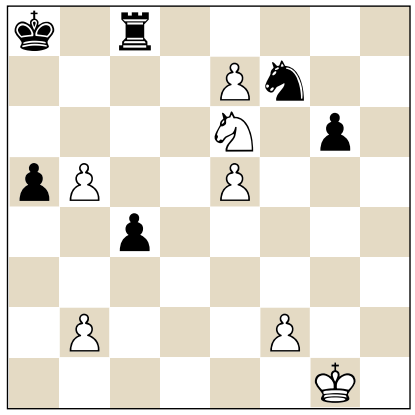


Timman 2017
White wins
(after L. Hanssen; original)

The first thing White must do is support his foremost e-pawn.
1.♘c5 ♖f8
The only way to stop the e-pawn from queening. Now White must deploy his other knight. But how?



2.♘f4!
An amazing knight sacrifice that Black simply has to accept, because the knight is on its way to d5, where the combined strength of the knight pair and the white passed pawns would be too much for him.
Insufficient is 2.♘e3 in view of 2...♘d3!, and Black saves himself. 2.f4 also just falls short, as witness the long variation 2...♘d3 3.♘d7 ♖h8+ 4.♔g3 ♘xb2 5.f5 c3 6.♘e1 gxf5 7.exf5 ♘c4 8.f6 ♔b7 9.f7 ♘d6 10.♘c2 a4 11.♔f4 ♘xf7 12.exf7 ♔c7 13.f8♕ ♖xf8+ 14.♘xf8 ♔b6, with a draw because White will be unable to block the enemy pawns following Troitsky's method.
2...♖xf4 3.e7 ♖h4+ 4.♔g1!
The only correct square. After 4.♔g2 ♖h8 5.♘e6 ♘d7! 6.e5 ♔a7 7.♘f8 ♖xf8 8.e6 ♖xf2+ Black would win.
4...♖h8 5.♘e6 ♘f7 6.e5! ♖c8
Another critical moment.

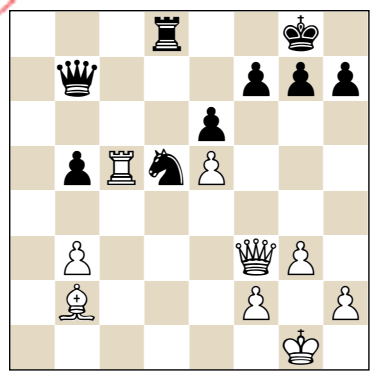


7.♔g2!!
Now the king must be precisely on this square. It is important that White has time for this quiet king move.
7...♔a7 8.♘d8! ♖xd8 9.e6
And wins.

■ ■ ■

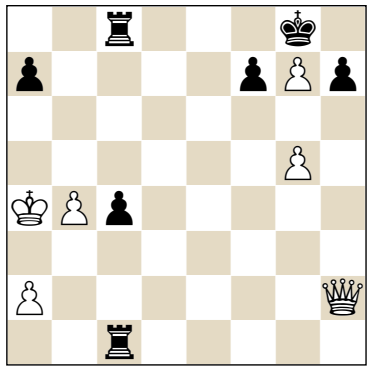
In the previous issue, Hans Ree wrote that I apparently did not know that he was a university graduate. I did know this, to be honest. The misunderstanding arose because I mixed up the academic terminology. What Euwe said to Donner and Ree was that Kuijpers had got his PhD. Hans could have known this, because he was there. And he will have to admit that he himself has never aspired to that status. ■

MAXIMize your Tactics Solutions



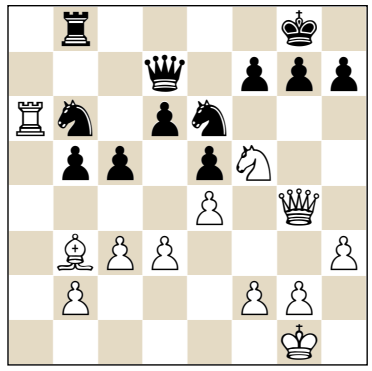
1. Mikhalevski-Faizrakhmanov
Novi Sad tt 2016

28...♘f4! White resigned. Both 29.♕xb7 and 29.♕xf4 are answered with 29...♖d1 mate. 28...♘e3 was equally good.



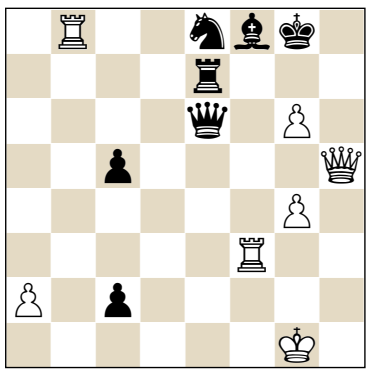
2. V.Moiseenko-I.Popov
Sochi Russia tt rapid 2016

39.g6! fxg6 40.♕e5! ♖f1 There was no escape for the rook: 40...♖a8 41.♕d5+ or 40...♖d8 41.♕e6+ ♔xg7 42.♕e7+. **41.♕e6+** And White won.



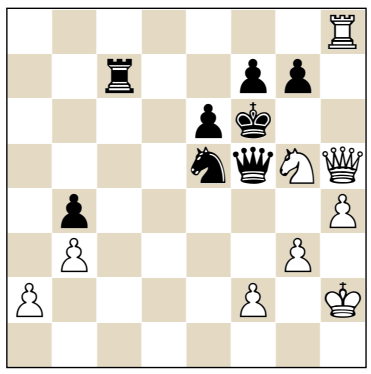
3. Predke-Ahvenjarvi
Novi Sad tt 2016

The black queen turns out to be vulnerable: **26.♘xg7! ♘xg7 27.♖xb6! ♕c7 28.♖xb8+ ♕xb8 29.♕d7** And Black soon resigned.



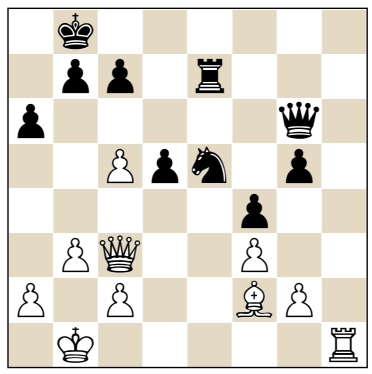
4. Iljin-Tsydypov
St Petersburg 2016

43.♖xf8+! ♔xf8 44.♕h8+ ♕g8 45.♖xe8+! With a picturesque finale after 45...♖xe8 46.♕f6+. Black resigned. Note that 45.♕f6+ ♖f7 would miss the win.



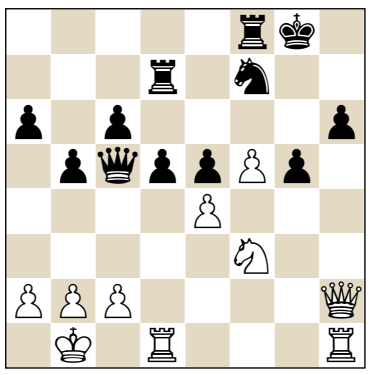
5. Mainka-Koch
Germany Bundesliga B 2016/17

55.♘e4+! ♔e7 56.♖e8+! ♔d7 57.♕d1+ ♔xe8 57...♔c6 loses to 58.♕d6+ ♔b7 59.♘c5+ ♖xc5 60.♖b8+ ♔a7 61.♕b6 mate, while 57...♘d3!? 58.♕xd3+ ♕d5 59.♕xd5+ exd5 60.♖e5 dxe4 61.♖xe4 is hopeless too. **58.♘d6+** And White won.



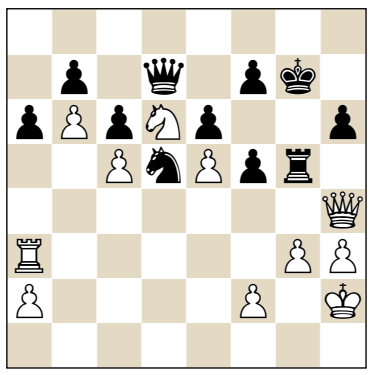
6. Havasi-Nemeth
Budapest 2016

32.♖h8+ ♔a7 32...♖e8 loses a piece after 33.♕xe5. **33.c6+ b6 34.♗xb6+! ♔xb6** Or 34...cxb6 35.c7. **35.♖b8+ ♔a7 36.♕c5+! ♔xb8 37.♕b4+!** The black rook is White's ally! Black resigned in view of 37...♔c8 38.♕b7+ ♔d8 39.♕b8 mate.



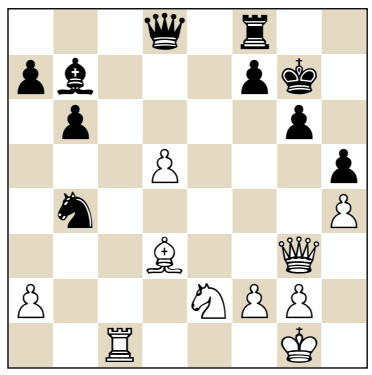
7. Gordievsky-Dvalishvili
Moscow 2016

31.♘xg5! ♘xg5 32.♕xh6 ♘h7 If 32...♖g7 33.f6, or 32...♘f3 33.♖h3. **33.♕e6+** Only this wins. **33...♖ff7 34.♖xh7! ♔xh7 35.♕g6+ ♔h8 36.♖h1+ ♖h7 37.♕e8+** Black resigned.



8. Zvjaginsev-Schwarz
Novi Sad tt 2016

44.♖xa6! bxa6 45.b7 ♕d8 46.♕xh6+! ♔xh6 47.♘xf7+ Taking the queen and promoting the pawn. A slightly less spectacular way to do the same was 44.f4 ♖g6 45.♖xa6! bxa6 46.b7 ♕c7 47.♘e8+.



9. Koch-Yankelevich
Belgium tt 2016/17

24.♗xg6! fxg6 25.♖c7+ ♖f7 26.♘f4! Forks all around! **26...♕xc7** More aesthetic was 26...♗xd5 27.♕xg6+ ♔f8 28.♕h6+ ♔g8 29.♘g6! ♖xc7 30.♕h8+ etc. **27.♘e6+** Black resigned shortly after.

Just Checking

Jovanka Houska

CURRENT ELO: 2389

DATE OF BIRTH: June 10, 1980

PLACE OF BIRTH: London, UK

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Bergen, Norway

What is your favourite city?
Paris.

What was the last great meal you had?
At Australian chef Bill Granger's 'Bills' in London with chess friends.

What drink brings a smile to your face?
A cup of tea.

Which book would you give to a dear friend?
My romance novel *The Mating Game*. ☺

What book is currently on your bedside table?
Heaven and Hell by Michael C. Doyle.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Monty Python's *Life of Brian* – it always makes me giggle.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Alan Rickman.

And a favourite actress?
The beautiful Eva Green.

What music are you currently listening to?
Anything by the production group Two Steps from Hell.

Is there a painting/work of art that moves you?
It's not strictly art but I find Kirsty Mitchell's 'Wonderland' photographs absolutely enthralling.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Boris Spassky. At the Gibraltar Chess Festival 2010, I was mournfully analysing a loss. Spassky passed by, and, catching sight of the position, he sat down and proceeded to help me analyse.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
The *Grandmaster Preparation* series by Jacob Aagaard.

What was your best result ever?
Winning the 2000 European Girls U-20.

And the best game you played?
Krishnan Sasikiran-Houska, British Championships 1999.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
For patriotic reasons, Li Chao vs Nigel Short, Baku Olympiad 2016.

What is your favourite square?
c6!

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Forward thinking.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
Maybe I subscribe to the lucky pen theory.

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or?
Instagram, always.

Who do you follow on Twitter?
Chess players.

What is your life motto?
Always dream big.

When were you happiest?
At my wedding.

When was the last time you cried?
I always weep after watching inspirational movies so probably not that long ago!

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
Hmmm... a super hero character would be pretty cool, preferably one that flies.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Eva Peron, Leonardo da Vinci, Ada Lovelace.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Raise your standard, progress equals happiness.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
The piano.

What is your greatest fear?
Not a big fan of anything poisonous.

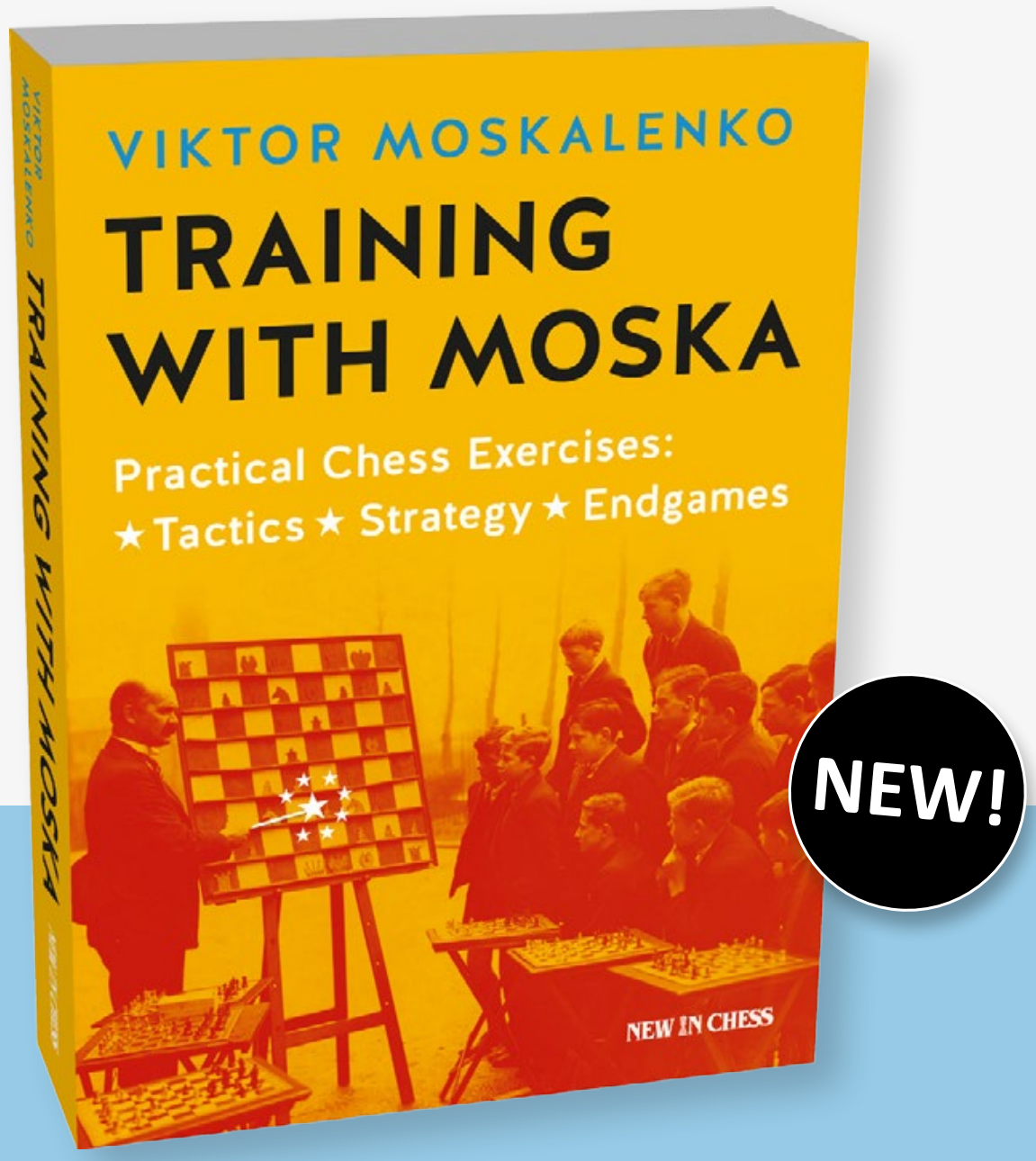
How do you relax?
Yoga.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
I would make national chess federations hire professional fundraisers.

What does it mean to be a chess player?
Being able to seek artistic, scientific, logical enlightenment... Or simply gifted at moving wooden pieces about. ☺☺

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'Play the opening like a book, the middlegame like a magician, and the endgame like a machine.' – Spielmann.

Have fun
+
improve your play



Viktor Moskalenko is one of the leading chess instructors of our time. Not only has he coached Masters and Grandmasters, including Vassily Ivanchuk, he has also taught hundreds of classes for amateurs and his best-selling books have inspired thousands of ambitious club players all over the world.

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